SKETCHES

OF

HISTORY.

IN SIX SERMONS.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

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M,DCC,LXXXIV.

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

R I C H A R D,

LORD BISHOP OF LLANDAFF,

AS TO AN ECCLESIASTIC, WITHOUT PRIDE,

WITHOUT AVARICE, WITHOUT SECULAR

AMBITION,

WHO BY HIS ABILITIES IS CAPABLE OF

DOING HONOUR TO ANY SOCIETY,

AND BY HIS VIRTUES OF ADORNING ANY

RELIGION.

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,

A TESTIMONY OF VENERATION TO THE

HONOURABLE SINGULARITY OF

HIS CHARACTER,

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBEDIENT

MOST DEVOTED SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.

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SERMON I.

THE RESIGNATION OF AARON.

SERMON I.

THE RESIGNATION OF AARON.

LEVITICUS X. 3.

——*And Aaron held his peace.*

AS the mind of man is much more forcibly impreſſed by inſtances drawn from real life, than by abſtract precepts and a dry detail of duty, I have choſen, in diſcourſing upon the moſt difficult of all religious duties, that of reſignation, to inforce thoſe principles which I may be enabled to ſuggeſt, by an example, perhaps the moſt venerable, and the moſt aſtoniſhing, that is recorded in holy writ.

Aaron had juſt loſt two of his ſons. They were the elder, and the hope of his houſe. They appear to have been hitherto remarkable for their modeſty and ingenuity, and all thoſe qualities that flatter paternal pride, and blow up natural affection to a flame. They had been lately diſtinguiſhed by the Supreme being with the moſt honourable token of his complacence, in being called up, with Moſes and Aaron, and the venerable elders of Iſrael, into the mount of communication. *And they ſaw the God of Iſrael; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of ſapphire-ſtone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearneſs. And the Lord laid not his hand upon them; alſo they ſaw God, and did eat and drink.*—Aaron had juſt before the fatal cataſtrophe upon which our attention is turned, been engaged

engaged with them in the moſt ſoothing ordinance, the being conſecrated to the perpetual prieſthood of that ſplendid and auguſt religion, which was now preſcribed for national obſervance.

Upon the laſt day of the ſolemn feaſt, with which this great occaſion was commemorated, *Nadab and Abihu, the ſons of Aaron, took either of them his cenſer, and put fire therein, and put incenſe thereon, and offered ſtrange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.*—It is conjectured by the critics, with ſome plauſibility, that the fact of two ſo excellent men as theſe appear to have been, having fallen unadviſedly into ſo great an error, is to be ac-

counted for by the ſuppoſition of their having eaten and drank too liberally in the gaiety of the feaſt. They build their hypotheſis on the precept that follows in the manner of a ſequel to the ſtory. *And the Lord ſpake unto Aaron, ſaying, Do not drink wine nor ſtrong drink, thou nor thy ſons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, leſt ye die: It ſhall be for a ſtatute for ever throughout your generations; that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean; and that ye may teach the children of Iſrael all the ſtatutes which the Lord hath ſpoken unto them by the hand of Moſes.*—In this caſe, and conſidering their crime, as a ſudden ſtart of irregularity, and not flatly inconſiſtent with a general character of virtue and piety, we may be apt to think their very ſignal

nal cataſtrophe, a too great and unreaſonable ſeverity. But if we would at all enter into the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, we muſt remember that God does not act in it ſimply as a creator, but as a political legiſlator; that their government was a theocracy, and God was their king. Now it has ever been conſidered as an indiſpenſible piece of civil policy, to inflict a heavy puniſhment upon the firſt tranſgreſſors of a law. Had the Hebrew code, immediately upon its inſtitution, been ſuffered to be ſo groſsly violated in one of its moſt important precepts with impunity, it had infallibly forfeited the popular veneration, and muſt quickly have ſunk into obloquy and contempt.

Permit me here to ſtate to you the genuine language of human nature

upon an occaſion like this. "Great "God! I acknowledge thy abſolute "power, thy indefeaſible right over "whatever I enjoy. But ſomething "muſt be allowed to humanity. Any "other gratification I could quietly "have parted with. Hadſt thou put "forth thy hand, and impoveriſhed "my ſubſtance; hadſt thou lain me "down under a lingering or a painful "diſeaſe; hadſt thou excited againſt "me a mutiny of the congregation; "hadſt thou taken away my friends, "my ſiſter, my brother, I ſhould ſtill "have had where to recur for com-"fort; I ſhould ſtill have ſupported "myſelf upon the ſtaff of my old age. "But thou haſt taken away my ſons, "and what have I more? My ſons, "my two ſons, the pride of my heart, "and the deſire of my eyes, ſo pious "and dutiful, ſo gentle and engaging,

"whom

" whom even thou didſt ſo honourably
" diſtinguiſh; to be cut off in the full
" bloom of manhood, and the mid
" career of honour; to be taken from
" a father, decrepid, and helpleſs, and
" juſt ready to ſink with the weight of
" years to oblivion and a grave; to
" be taken in a moment, at a blow,—
" Juſt God, it is too much! But no.
" Bear me witneſs, my God, I could
" have endured all this, with manly
" reſolution, and without a ſigh. But
" here is the ſting. This is the barbed
" arrow that rankles at my heart. Had
" they died in the bed of honour;
" could I have drawn over their ghaſt-
" ly coarſes the pall of renown; nay,
" had they fallen the victims of diſ-
" eaſe, had they only remained mo-
" numents of the uncertainty of all
" things here below, it were enough:
" it is well. I would have fallen upon

" my knees, and adored my gracious
" creator. But to be thus overtaken
" with intemperance, to have diſ-
" graced themſelves before the con-
" gregation, and in this act of deteſta-
" tion to have fallen victims to di-
" vine juſtice, to have been conſti-
" tuted the nefarious monuments of
" diſobedience to all future ages;
" what ſhall I ſay more?"

It is with trembling and anxiety I go one ſtep farther, and lift up the remainder of the veil from off the father's heart.—" Monuments of diſ-
" obedience! ah, wherefore did I ſay
" they had been honoured and favoured
" of their God? Oh, aggravation! oh,
" torture! yes, they died in diſobedi-
" ence to that God, in rebellion againſt
" his government, in contempt of his
" authority, in ſcorn of his moſt holy
" injunctions.

" injunctions. So diſtinguiſhed, ſo
" highly favoured, the heads of the
" people, the exemplars of the con-
" gregation. Now taken away in their
" ſins, in the very act of provocation,
" by the very token of diſpleaſure.
" Now called to their account, ' no
" reckoning made, with all their im-
" perfections on their head.' No, I
" cannot, will not bear it. Hell, and
" all the furies of the abyſs ſwim be-
" fore my eyes! Oh, my ſons, my
" dear ſons, loſt for ever, a long, eter-
" nal for ever! Yes, I will curſe my
" birth, I will curſe the mother that
" bore me. God, God, wherefore
" didſt thou make me, why didſt thou
" give me ſons, why was I not born a
" tyger, why didſt thou not leave me
" childleſs?—I had not then been left,
" feeble, and worn with croſſes,

——" to the mercy
" Of a rude ſtream, that muſt for ever hide me."

My

My friends, from the peculiar aggravations of his calamity, as ſtated in the above enumeration, you will probably be ready to acknowledge, that never father felt a ſeverer ſhock, never were reſignation and pious acquieſcence called to a ſharper trial. You will perhaps think, that there is nothing unnatural or extravagant in the language I have given to the occaſion. You will perhaps imagine there is in it as much piety and ſubmiſſion as human nature will afford. I am afraid there are few of us, that are capable of feeling the true tenderneſs of a parent, who, if we were placed in the patriarch's ſituation, would behave at all better, or manifeſt a firmer reſolution, than I have repreſented.—Having then viewed the calamity as it is in itſelf, and as I believe it would affect the bulk of that part of mankind,

who

who are not wholly deſtitute of religious principles, let us alſo view it in its effect upon the patriarch. If his behaviour be indeed ſuch as will ſtand the teſt of the ſevereſt moral criticiſm, it will ſhine the brighter by being contraſted with that mixed picture of infirmity and frailty that we have already painted.

Immediately upon this awful event we find Moſes with generous attachment repairing to the preſence of his afflicted brother. How ſtriking muſt have been the interview! Aaron, we will ſuppoſe, thrown upon his couch, bathed in tears, in all the agony of paternal diſtreſs. Upon the entrance of his brother, he turns up a look of ſpeechleſs ſorrow, and, with a liſtleſs, wild regard, ſeems to aſk, what it is that thus breaks in upon the ſacred

ſolitude

ſolitude of anguiſh and deſpair? The nobleſt heart and the firmeſt principles cannot recollect themſelves in ſo unlooked for a ſhock, without the aſſiſtance of ſome kindred ſoul, leſs immediately intereſted, and who is at leiſure to ſoothe the anguiſh and collect the attention of the diſconſolate mourner. The countenance of Moſes is marked with the tendereſt ſympathy, together with an anxiety to lighten and relieve. His eye is immoveably fixed upon the viſage of Aaron. He ſeizes his hand, and tenderly preſſes it, and ſeats himſelf beſide him. They look wiſtfully at each other, and remain for ſome time in the moſt uninterrupted ſilence. There is not a moment in the world, ſo intereſting, ſo crowded with a thouſand nameleſs ſenſations, as theſe intervals of ſtilneſs and amazement. Words cannot expreſs them: they

beggar

beggar deſcription. At length Moſes, heſitating, and with interrupted words, addreſſes himſelf to ſpeak. He begins with ſympathy, with a fair ſtate of the calamity, with commending and participating the anguiſh of his brother. His tears flow apace. Having by theſe means ſummoned the attention of the trembling mourner, he goes a ſtep farther. He reminds him of their guilt, and the inconteſtible juſtice of their fate. As he advances in his argument, he aſſumes a loftier ſtyle. He bids him think of the ſpotleſs purity of God, his unequalled and immaculate holineſs, his infinite, inconceivable exaltation above the creatures he has made. "Shall this God be violated? "Shall this purity be ſtained, this ho- "lineſs blotted and deformed? By "what, by whom? By the duſt un- "der his feet, by inſects that owe him "a mo-

"a momentary exiſtence, by *dwellers* "*in clay, who are cruſhed before the* "*moth.* Oh, recollect the impious, "inexcuſable, inexpiable crime of "blaſphemy, ſacrilege and inſult!" Perhaps he added to this fearful arraignment, a hope, that as their crime, however aggravated, was the crime of a moment, that as their death was rather intended as an awful ſanction to his law, and to impreſs a religious awe and aſtoniſhment on the minds of the congregation, they might yet be ſaved in the *terrible day of the Lord*, he might yet pardon their guilty raſhneſs, for the ſake of thoſe virtues for which he had heretofore diſtinguiſhed them, and permit their tremendous and unexampled cataſtrophe, to expiate a guilt, not deliberate, not weighed in all its horrid aggravations, not acted from the

dictate

dictate of a callous heart, and a cool defiance of the Majesty of heaven.

In the mean time the venerable, drooping father, from the attention to which he is roused, begins to catch the sacred enthusiasm of the friend of God. He acquiesces in the solemn dignity of the arguments that are urged. He is calmed and composed with the pleasing encouragement and hope, with which they are concluded. By degrees every despairing symptom, every mark of vehemence and impatience vanishes from his countenance. He no longer rolls his eyes in vacancy and wildness. Every murmur dies away in his bosom. He is composed into an aspect of sober sorrow, serious, soft, and melting. It does not betray insensibility, or the lightest forgetfulness of the late awful event; but it is

pious

pious, ſubmiſſive and reſigned. *Aaron held his peace.*—Expreſſive ſilence! Venerable muſings! I will not interrupt your courſe. I will not attempt to tranſlate into language, what language can ſo imperfectly expreſs. Sure I am, that every ſuſceptible heart, every mind endowed with one ſpark of ſenſibility and feeling, will find more dignity, more beauty, more copiouſneſs and more expreſſion, in this awful ſtilneſs of the ſoul, by which the viſage is made tranquil and ſedate, and the tongue chained up in unutterable ſilence, than in the moſt ſplendid harangue, and the moſt poliſhed rhetoric.

My friends, from the enlargement I have beſtowed upon the ſtory, I have left myſelf leſs room for argument and precept. It remains with you to judge whether

whether any thing has been loſt by that means from my principal deſign. If the ſtory do really contain ſo noble and ſingular an illuſtration as I apprehend it to do, I ſuppoſe no arguments however ſolid, and no precepts however uſeful, that I may be able to ſuggeſt, will be likely to make ſo deep an impreſſion upon your minds, or ſo fully to convince you at once of the practicableneſs and the beauty of the duty in queſtion. Which of you were ever involved in circumſtances of ſo complicated diſtreſs, as thoſe of Aaron? I pretend to but little acquaintance with life. My time for obſervation and experience has been very ſhort. The utmoſt range of my imagination however will furniſh no calamity beyond it. All that can mortify the man, or come home to the man of rank and diſtinction: all that can

touch the parent, or pull down the man of years and infirmity: all that can agonize the man of feeling, or torture the ſaint, ſeems collected here. But if none of you ever ſuffered an equal calamity, did any of you ever exhibit ſo godlike a patience, ſo pure a reſignation? You, I will ſuppoſe, have fallen under ſome dreadful miſfortune. Your eſtate has been impoveriſhed, you have felt all the languors, or all the the torments of diſeaſe, your good name has been tarniſhed, your friends have betrayed you, you have been deprived of the partner of your life, or bereaved of your children. And did you never utter a murmur? Have you never, if not in word, yet in thought, arraigned the conduct of the diſpoſer of all things? Have you manifeſted no tokens of impatience; been all calmneſs, compoſure and reſignation?

tion? Have you not, in the height of your anguiſh, ſecretly curſed your birth? Have you not wiſhed, impatiently wiſhed, to die; to be buried quick in the ſilent, unconſcious grave? Or if you have been reſtrained, has it been by the motives of piety, and virtue, and ſubmiſſion?—It ſhall be the buſineſs of what remains of my diſcourſe, to ſtate to you, with the utmoſt brevity, a few of thoſe conſiderations, which ſhould diſſuade us from obſtinacy or outrage, which ſhould induce us to humility and ſubmiſſion, and lead us to imitate the conduct of the patriarch, whatever afflictions may befal us, with whatever calamities we may be viſited, to compoſe our countenances to ſedateneſs, to reſtrain our tongues from blame, and to *hold our peace.*

In the firſt place, we may remember that God is our maſter, and proprietor, and may do what he will with his own. This obſervation aſks one word by way of explanation. The creator may place his creatures in a high or a low ſtation; he may make of ſome veſſels to honour, and of others to diſhonour. But the right of the creator does not extend to the making an innocent being, in a comprehenſive ſenſe, and with a view to the whole of his exiſtence, miſerable. God himſelf has not a right to be a tyrant. Within theſe limits, however, he may without queſtion diſpoſe of us as he pleaſes. A world of derived beings, an immenſe wide creation, requires an extended ſcale with various ranks and orders of exiſtence. And the meaneſt of theſe have no right to queſtion their maker, Why haſt thou made me thus? Why didſt

didſt thou not make me more conſpicuous? Why didſt thou not place me higher? If he be unfortunate, he cannot pretend to fathom the plans of infinite wiſdom, to determine what benevolent ends may be anſwered to his fellow creatures or himſelf; he muſt leave it to his maker to fill up the inequalities of the preſent ſtate, with the ſtupendous retributions of a future.

Secondly, it is alſo to be remembered, that we are ſinners, and have forfeited the exemptions and immunities of an innocent being. And this is a conſideration of great weight. Whoever is once fully convinced of his guilt, ſees ſin in all its vileneſs and atrociouſneſs, will never again open his mouth to utter one murmuring word againſt his creator. There is

not a condition of life in which we can be placed, a degree of temporary wretchedneſs in which we can be involved, that will give us room to exclaim, *Lord, thou haſt lain upon us more than our iniquities deſerve*; that will not give us room to praiſe and adore a merciful creator for his patience, and forbearance, and long ſuffering. The reaſon, however ſtrange it may appear, that there is ſo much complaint in the world of undue hardſhip and ſeverity, is, that there is ſo little true penitence and piety, moral worth and deſert.

Thirdly, it is to be conſidered, that afflictions are the fruits of divine love. God ſees the frailty of our natures, he knows how liable we are to be undone by a courſe of temporal eaſe and proſperity. He has therefore, in much mercy,

mercy, conſtituted the preſent world a mixed ſcene, and interwoven the thread of our lives with many of thoſe ſalutary diſappointments, that may call off our attention from the pleaſures of time and ſenſe, and fix it upon thoſe of virtue and of heaven. It is an univerſal law of the divine government, that there is no affliction for which we ſhall not be the better, unleſs by our own fault. And it is an infallible maxim to the pious and the holy, *that all things ſhall work together for good unto them.* And will you contentedly give up the joys beyond the ſkies, that ſo you may eſcape a little thwarting and diſappointment in this tranſitory ſtate? And will you, ſo you may be perfectly at your eaſe, and have every thing go on to your mind, tamely ſacrifice the conſcious approbation of virtue, and ſubmit to have

every generous affection drowned in intemperance, contracted into ſelfiſhneſs, and hardened into impiety? If ſo, be aſſured, no affliction you have yet taſted, no dreg from the cup of woe, that has yet been diſpenſed you, can ever repay the baſe ſentiment, the atrocious guilt, by which ſuch a ſacrifice muſt be dictated.

Fourthly, reſignation is the moſt direct and proper improvement of affliction. If you wiſh to ſecond the gracious deſigns of heaven upon your ſoul, nothing can do it ſo effectually as acquieſcence and ſubmiſſion. If you wiſh to have the affliction removed, or not to be again viſited with the divine chaſtiſements, nothing will ſo immediately propitiate the ſovereign diſpenſer, or take away the neceſſity of farther calls to repentance and amendment.

ment. Reſignation calms the ſurges of the mind, calls home the wandering attention, and leaves us room to reflect on our ways, and conſider the intent of thoſe divine meſſengers, under whoſe inflictions we are mourning. Reſignation in the moſt diſtinguiſhing manner anſwers their intent, by bending us to a conformity to the counſels of heaven, by cauſing that, in regard of us, the will of God *be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

But what I would principally remark, and what falls in moſt immediately with the tendency of my text, is the grace, the amiableneſs, and the beauty of this affection, both with reſpect to man, and with reſpect to God. We ought ever to reflect, that however keenly we may feel our misfortunes, it is not to be expected that the world about

about us ſhould feel them in the ſame degree. Peeviſhneſs, and a continual propenſity to complaint, inſtead of exciting additional pity, tends only to dry up the ſources of that, which our misfortunes naturally excited. With the man we ſee continually breaking out into ſudden burſts of rage, and all the madneſs of ungovernable ſorrow, we are more inclined to be angry, than to ſympathiſe. If you ſhall meet with here and there a man of more than common humanity, and whoſe generoſity ſhall rather be increaſed than damped by theſe violent ſtarts of grief, yet it is unavoidable, in the ſame degree in which his tenderneſs is excited, his reverence for your character, and eſteem of your virtue will be diminiſhed. He will weep over your ſufferings, but he will feel an internal conviction, that part of thoſe ſufferings

are

are derived from the ſpring of guilt. Sirs, if you have one ſpark of generoſity, and the dignity of virtue, you will bluſh to be made the object of a compaſſion that is palled with ſo bitter an ingredient. Such compaſſion however is inconceivably rare to be met with; for with ninety-nine of an hundred of us, however inconſiſtent it may be with the precepts of Chriſt, where acknowledged guilt begins, compaſſion ends. —But now turn to the other character, to him, who retains the dignity of a man under the ſevereſt preſſure of misfortune. However much he may inwardly ſuffer, he ſcorns to complain. The ſevereſt torture cannot wring from him a murmur or a groan. He carefully ſhuts up his anguiſh in the little circle of his boſom, and outwardly adorns his countenance with all the ſerenity of complacence and compoſure.

ſure. His friends perceive how he is inwardly worn with anguiſh and ſorrow, and they come to condole with him. But he chides the weakneſs of their tears, calls forth their courage, and bids them be of good heart ſtill.

"He ſits, like patience on a monument,
"Smiling at grief."

Sirs, with what a warm, what an overflowing pity do we conſider a character like this? A pity mixed with every generous ſentiment, with love, eſteem, reverence and admiration. Who would not wiſh to be made the object of a paſſion like this?—Go then in the path that leads to it. Be pious, humble and ſubmiſſive, cheerful, contented and reſigned.

But we have a nobler motive in reſerve. God from on high looks down with

with complacence on the character I have deſcribed. He has learned to look through all terreſtrial appearances, all ſecond cauſes, and to aſcribe every thing to the firſt great cauſe of univerſal nature. He acknowledges the hand of God in every event, and conſiders him as ordaining whatever comes to paſs. The malice of his enemies cannot move the ſettled temper of his ſoul. He knows his *enemies are the ſword in thy hand, O God.* The ſeeming caprices of fortune cannot diſturb his ſerenity, or urge him to ſo much as a haſty word. He knows, that however fortuitous and irregular they may ſeem, they are in reality the production of the matureſt deliberation, and the exacteſt ſyſtem. In a word, inſtead of being the butt to every dirty paſſion of every contemptible being around him, inſtead of being

the

the ſport of every wind, whirled about with every petty accident, he conſiders himſelf, in a practical ſenſe, as alone with the great author of his being, and is affected by every incident only as he perceives it declaratory of the will and intention, the pleaſure and diſpleaſure of God. He ſees "a hand" in every ſcene "you cannot ſee;" he hears "a voice" in every event "you cannot hear;" and with a view to that hand, to that voice, his hopes and fears, his terrors and deſires, his joys and ſorrows are all directed and governed.

He has alſo added to this conſciouſneſs of the hand of God an unlimited acquieſcence in his wiſdom and goodneſs. It is difficult perhaps for the pride of man to ſit down calmly with an acknowledgment of ignorance, and

to

to yield his underſtanding and will in unreſerved ſubmiſſion to that of another. But this is the ſacred leſſon he has learned. He truſts *in the Lord with all his heart, and leans not to his own underſtanding.* He has no will but that of God, not a paſſion, nor a thought, that is not ſubdued into ſilence before him. His language is like the beautiful language of the prophet, that has been ſo often repeated to you. *Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the ſtall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my ſalvation.*—My friends, there needs no argument to convince you that ſuch a character as this muſt appear an object of honour and love to God himſelf.

Such

Such then is reſignation. It is highly reaſonable and incumbent in itſelf conſidered. It is all amiableneſs and attraction to every beholder. Conſider the example of Aaron. In pitying ſuch a man, are we not apt to feel a generous reſentment, a ſenſe that the man was worthy of a better fortune? Contraſt this with the reſentment we feel for a man peeviſh and impatient, madly curſing his fortune, and arrogantly arraigning his creator. Add to it the complacency Deity feels for ſo faithful a ſervant, ſo loyal, ſo obedient a ſubject. Does heaven now appear to frown upon him? Shortly it ſhall regard him with unequivocal, never changing ſmiles. His afflictions are but the clouds of a morning, or the flitting dew. They are the furnace from which the gold comes forth ſeven times brighter, purer than before.

Shortly

Shortly his refulgent ſun of virtue and felicity ſhall break forth with meridian, undecaying beams. Shortly the Lord ſhall make up his jewels, and the humble and the patient ſhall ſhine forth as ſtars in the kingdom of the Father. We have all of us in this tranſitory, afflicted ſtate, enough ſooner or later to prove our virtue, and exerciſe our reſignation. May we all of us exemplify the quietneſs of an Aaron, and the unreſentful mildneſs of a redeemer, that ſo we may be united with theſe great and illuſtrious characters for ever hereafter!

SERMON II.

THE DEGENERACY OF HAZAEL.

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THE DEGENERACY OF HAZAEL.

2 KINGS viii. 11.

And he ſettled his countenance ſtedfaſtly, until he was aſhamed; and the man of God wept.

THE ſtory of which my text is a part is by no means unworthy our attention. It exhibits a ſpecimen of thoſe ſilent and imperceptible advances, by which vice inſinuates itſelf into the human heart. "No man," ſays a celebrated moraliſt of antiquity, "ever paſſed inſtantly to the extremity

" of vice." The ſinner arrived at the end of this courſe may perhaps be without the reach of reproof. But to thoſe, who are only heedleſs and unguarded, we addreſs ourſelves with confidence and hope. To ſuch, an example, ſo ſtriking as that we have here exhibited to us, cannot be without its effect.

Hazael was the firſt miniſter of one of thoſe eaſtern governments, ſtrangers to the great principles of policy and juſtice, that are indeed but another name for lawleſs oppreſſion and anarchy. The ſovereign had juſt been ſeized with a ſevere and dangerous diſtemper. His ſubjects had long trembled at his nod; they proſtrated themſelves in his preſence with humble adoration; he had *ſat in the ſeat of God, ſhowing himſelf that he was God.* But omnipotent as he appeared in the eyes of

of his heartleſs people, he trembled with the moſt abject terror under the dart of death. While in health he had treated the God of Iſrael with contempt: ſtretched upon a bed of ſickneſs, he addreſſes to his deſpiſed prophet this poor ſpirited meſſage. *Thy ſon, Benhadad, king of Syria, ſendeth unto thee ſaying, Shall I recover of this diſeaſe?* To ſhow that this was not a ſlight, irreſolute meaſure, but that his heart was in it, he makes Hazael, the prime miniſter of the kingdom, his meſſenger. He commands him to *meet Eliſha in the gate of the city; and to take a preſent with him, even of every good thing in Damaſcus, forty camels burden.* Every mark of reſpect was deſigned to be ſhown; he was to *ſtand up before* the prophet, and to receive his communication with the utmoſt politeneſs and deference.

In this intereſting interview, after the original buſineſs of their meeting was tranſacted, we have this incident recorded by the ſacred hiſtorian. *And he ſettled his countenance ſtedfaſtly until he was aſhamed; and the man of God wept.* Words, whoſe moſt natural ſenſe, as biſhop Patrick obſerves, is this: He looked upon Hazael ſo long with a ſettled countenance, that Hazael was aſhamed, and he himſelf fell a weeping. Why did he weep? *And Hazael ſaid, Why weepeth my lord? And he anſwered, becauſe I know the evil thou wilt do unto the children of Iſrael: their ſtrong holds wilt thou ſet on fire, and their young men wilt thou ſlay with the ſword, and wilt daſh their children, and rip up their women with child.* His tears were the tears of the good man and the patriot. He ſaw the impending diſtreſſes of his country. He ſaw in his now client the inſtrument

inſtrument of their fate. *And he ſettled his countenance ſtedfaſtly.* He would read, as it were, in the lines of his phyſiognomy the hiſtory of Paleſtine. He would ſee what were now the traits of that ſavage temper which was ſhortly to break out into cruelty and brutality till then unheard of. He did not look into long futurity. He did not ſeek out the aged villain in the countenance of a blooming youth. He only looked into the next incident of Hazael's character. He only ſought out the very next ſcene in the drama of his life. In his return from the gate of the city in which he met Eliſha to the palace of Benhadad, he conceived the traiterous plan of his maſter's murder. Immediately he delivers the fictitious meſſage, *Thou ſhalt ſurely recover.* On the morrow he prepares the inſtrument of death.

And

And in this circumſtance let us aſk, What ſign does he betray of that obdurate heart, which was ſhortly to ſtamp him to all future ages a villain of the firſt magnitude? Does he treat the inuendo of the prophet with contemptuous ſelf-confidence? Does he treat it with the ſuſpicious paſſionateneſs of conſcious guilt? Far otherwiſe. When ſimply rendered the object of the intranced gaze of the prophet, without being able to penetrate the reaſon of his conduct, we find him manifeſting all the tokens of ingenuous ſhame. Ingenuous ſhame is one of the cleareſt marks, is one of the ſtrongeſt barriers of exalted virtue. The undiſſembling bluſh, that ſits upon the cheek of youth; the honeſt tongue, that faulters under the eſſays of falſehood; the trembling nerve, that refuſes to wield the ſword of death, and the

the inſtrument of deſtruction; theſe, my friends, are ſome of the nobleſt prerogatives humanity has to boaſt. They ſhall entwine like a deathleſs laurel, in the crown of righteouſneſs, that is reſerved to immortalize her. And yet Hazael we find knew how to bluſh. Scarcely ſhall we meet any where with a ſtory calculated to ſet in a higher point of view the modeſty and ſimplicity of its hero. When the prophet runs over the fatal catalogue of his future cruelties, he is yet far from raſh aſſurance and angry diſdain. He yet gives himſelf the unaſſuming, the unreſentful ſtyle, *thy ſervant*. He yet puts the feelings of his heart in the modeſt, heſitating form of a queſtion. And laſtly, he manifeſts the moſt generous abhorrence of the character the prophet had drawn for him. Is *thy ſervant? Is*

thy

thy ſervant? Is thy ſervant *a dog*,—*that he ſhould do this great thing?*

There is not a criſis in the univerſe more affecting than this. To ſee virtue hovering over the edge of the precipice; to ſee conſcious innocence, her eyes bound over with the fillets of unſuſpecting ſimplicity; to ſee her about to paſs the Rubicon of vice; to enter a country from which ſhe ſhall never return; to ſet her foot upon the trap door of that eternal deſtruction from which ſhe ſhall not recover herſelf,—if indeed there be *joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth*, ſure I am that this is a ſcene for angels to weep at. Well mayeſt thou weep, Oh Eliſha! —Thy country's ruin is a ſubject to demand thy tears. But to ſee it's author, to ſettle thy countenance ſtedfaſtly on his, to ſee Hazael aſhamed, is

an

an object to touch, to wound, to tear the heart by a graſp ſtill more ſenſible, more generous, more heroic.—" Oh, " Hazael, ſee where thou ſtandeſt! " Thou art yet great and virtuous; a " pattern of modeſty, gentleneſs, and " ingenuity. One moment ſhall undo " thee. One moment ſhall blot thy " character with indelible diſgrace. " Thou ſhalt never, never riſe again. " Thou ſhalt never again lift up thy " head from that ſea of blood in which " thou art about to plunge thyſelf. " From conſcious innocence and fear- " leſs truth, thou ſhalt learn to bluſh " with vice and tremble with hypocri- " ſy. From well natured humanity " and generous rectitude, thou ſhalt " become a pattern for cruelty, a poor " hearted, 'cringing, ſmiling, damned " villain.' *The graſshopper ſhall be a* " *burden.* Thy *hand ſhall be againſt*

" *every*

" *every man, and every man's hand againſt*
" thee. No longer diſtinguiſhed by
" that acute ſenſibility which hath hi-
" therto marked thy character, thou
" ſhalt become hard as a milſtone and
" inexorable as the grave. No longer
" filled with the ſerene pleaſure of vir-
" tue, thou ſhalt be agitated by inceſ-
" ſant fear, terror, agony: thou ſhalt
" hate mankind, thou ſhalt hate thy
" own ſoul, thou ſhalt *curſe God and*
" *die.*"

Hazael, my friends, being dead yet ſpeaketh. Like Dives in the parable he addreſſeth a warning to ſurvivors *leſt they alſo come into the place of torment.* And theſe are his words. " Oh,
" thou, whoever thou art, that truſteſt
" in man, and reſteſt thyſelf in an arm
" of fleſh, thou ſhalt be as one leaning
" upon a broken reed. Art thou in

" the

" the bloom of youth, full of ſtrength
" and vigour? So alſo was I. Art thou
" modeſt and ingenuous, apt to learn
" and diffident of thyſelf? So alſo was
" I. Art thou full of virtuous habits,
" aſhamed of every thing vicious and
" diſhonourable, and acutely ſenſible
" to the very *appearances of evil?* So
" alſo was I. Oh then, if thou would
" perſevere unto the end, look up in-
" ceſſantly for the almighty bleſſing.
" And in confidence of that bleſſing,
" *be diligent*; *watch unto holineſs*; guard
" againſt the approaches of the enemy;
" guard againſt the beginnings of
" vice."

The importance of theſe advices is infinitely greater, than will at firſt be imagined. The vices of the preſent age, the vices of all ages from the creation of the world have principally originated

originated in this conduct, the neglect of little things. By this conduct men ſet open the flood-gates of vice. It is abſurd, it is morally impoſſible that little things ſhould not lead on to greater. You may as well "go ſtand "upon the beach, and bid the main "flood bate his uſual height;" you may ſpeak peace to the tempeſtuous ocean with as much effect, as attempt to ſtop the career of impetuous paſſion, as ſay to the flood of evil communications and habits, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no further*. Convinced of the tremendous folly of this plan, I will ſet my face againſt it.

And the firſt danger of which I have to warn you, is that of blunting the original ſenſibility of your hearts, and weakening the force of natural conſcience. When we ſtep, as it were, from

from non-exiſtence upon this mortal ſtage, we are ſtrangers to things around us. To ſtrangers our attachment is not ſtrong, our partiality is not great. Unwarped and impartial, at leaſt to a certain degree, we have an ear for the voice of truth. It doth not yet ſound entirely harſh and grating upon our ſenſes. But as we go forward in the world, as we become more acquainted with the objects around us, we become more attached and leſs impartial. Truth ſounds more diſſonant. It becomes gradually diſagreeable, neglected, deſpiſed. A little onward, and though God ſpake unto us in the voice of thunder, and though *one roſe* unto us *from the dead*, there would be *none to anſwer*, there would be *none that regarded*. Can ye not remember the time, when the ſight of a funeral made you pauſe in the midſt of wordly purſuits;

when the ſudden death of a friend gave a ſhock to your humanity? And now theſe things are familiar to you, and have loſt their effect. Can you not remember the time, when an earneſt addreſs from this place, rouſed all the nerves of your ſoul, and filled you with reſolutions that were not far from the kingdom of God? And now all theſe things are idle tales. Tremble, my dear hearer, tremble. Your *ſalvation* is now farther from you *than when you believed.*

But I forget the ſcope of my ſubject. I am not now to addreſs the veteran ſinner. I am to talk to men, who yet have ſouls and ſenſe. To men, whom I am to ſuppoſe yet open to all theſe things. You, my friends, deteſt the narrow ſoul, who willingly would involve the world in diſtreſs, ſo it might promote

promote his own intereſt. The deſolations of cruelty and the ravages of luſt, whatever petty gratifications they might bring along with them, are odious in your eyes. You can conceive of no pleaſure, ſuperior to that of ſiding with the oppreſſed, of illuminating the countenance of the deſolate, and wiping away the tear of the mourner. You remember the immortality for which you were deſtined. And you think the company of *angels and glorified ſpirits*, of all the good and the great that hiſtory hath recorded, of *the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born*, worth aſpiring after. When you recollect the greatneſs and majeſty of God; when you remember that he *ſtoopeth to behold the things, that are done in heaven*, that he condeſcendeth to regard the tranſactions of earth, that by him the very *hairs of our head are all*

numbered, you feel the profoundeſt reverence and the moſt ardent gratitude. And laſtly you honour the lamb-like patience of the holy Jeſus. You are raviſhed with affection, when you learn that all his ſufferings were undertaken in your behalf, to reſtore you to a virtue you had loſt, to a heaven you had forfeited, to a God you had refuſed to reign over you. If, my friends, theſe be the diſpoſitions of any of you, it is well. I congratulate you upon your advantages. I will addreſs you in the words of Jeſus to the young lawyer in the goſpel, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.* For remember I intreat you, I am not conſcious of having deſcribed any more than the genuine feelings of human nature, unhardened by cuſtom upon the ſubjects I have ſuggeſted. There needeth ſomething more, my friends. There needeth

eth an unſhaken reſolution and chriſtian perſeverance to carry on the work unto perfection.

But would ye retain theſe ſalutary feelings, theſe virtuous impreſſions? They are the key to the kingdom of heaven. Part with them, and the character that ye now deſpiſe as a brute, and deteſt as a devil, will ſoon grow familiar to you. So it was with Hazael.

But I repeat it, would you retain, would you cultivate them? Then above all things, avoid bad company. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* They will teach you to deſpiſe and to laugh at all that is glorious to God, and honourable to human nature. What an eaſy tranſition after this, to mix in all that is diſhonourable, that

is deteſtable? Frequently retire from the world. The world, when contemplated in ſolitude, will loſe many of thoſe attractions, that dazzled you in the buſtle of life. Do not ſhun the acquaintance of affliction. It will beyond all things meliorate your heart, open your eyes to behold the vanity of things temporal, and keep alive that virtuous ſenſibility *that worketh ſalvation.* Hold conſtant correſpondence with God. Send up your prayers to his footſtool. *Commune with your own heart in your cloſet, and be ſtill.* Seek to diſcover your true character. Watch the encroachments of vice, the opportunities of virtue. And when you have done all account yourſelves *unprofitable,* and look for God only to *work in* you *both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.*

But,

But, further ſecondly, another danger of which I would warn you, ariſes from the inſenſibility of the gradation from virtue to vice. They are indeed qualities in the laſt degree oppoſite and contradictory. But as in the execution of a ſkilful painter, the niceſt eye often cannot determine where one colour ends and another begins; ſo it is in this. Virtue is indeed one nice direction, which, whether we deviate from it in exceſs or in defect, it is equally dangerous. And then moral qualities have their ſeat in the heart. That heart is *deceitful above all things*. It requires an unremitting watch, or vice will have broke ground, will have pitched her tents, and caſt up her retrenchments, or ever we are aware. Still further. Senſibility of heart once fully counteracted, is not for us, but againſt us. It is like a battery of

cannon. Let the forces of virtue be fairly routed, let the enemy take poſſeſſion of it, and it is no longer our defence, but our deſtruction. Our own weapon is turned againſt ourſelves, and we are completely overthrown, by that which God and nature deſigned for our preſervation. A conſcience ever apt to awaken with the ſmalleſt ſtimulus, muſt aſſiduouſly be laid aſleep. One crime, that it may not too much agitate our ſpirits, muſt be buried under a multitude of others. That tenderneſs, which was ever apt to be touched and to be melted, will not ſtop at cool indifference, but muſt be congealed into cruelty, or agitated into phrenzy. Thus it was with Hazael. Of him I think I may venture to affirm, that had not heaven endowed him with that gentleneſs and ingenuity, which were calculated to raiſe him to

eternal

eternal joy, he would never have ſunk into that degenerate ferocity to harmleſs women and innocent children, that rendered him *tenfold more a child of hell*, than any of his contemporaries. And how ſoon was the change effected? How quickly did he put off the tender and ingenuous, for the unfeeling and the deteſtable? Or ever the ſun was ſet upon the ſcene of my text, he became a liar and an hypocrite. To-morrow he is a murderer. And anon a conqueror, a barbarian, and a tyrant. Scarcely did he rouſe from the ſcene of that virtue that made Eliſha weep, till he found himſelf plunged, irretrievably plunged, under the curſe of heaven, the execration of mankind, the object of his own aſtoniſhment, and horror, and eternal confuſion.

And

And can there be a motive to the withſtanding the firſt inroads of vice, more forcible than this? Vice is of a moſt inſinuating nature. Once overſtep her boundaries, and God only knows where you will ſtop. Once deviate from the plain road of honour and honeſty, and you are fully prepared to aſſert your devious path with all your might. My friends, there is nothing to which this ſituation can be likened with more propriety than to the placing ourſelves upon a precipice. It is ſlippery as glaſs. It is ſteep and abrupt. *It goeth down to death, and the ſteps thereof take hold on hell.* To regain the ſummit is a work unſpeakably difficult. But to deſcend farther and farther is eaſy and natural. It requires no exertion. It is a mere matter of courſe. Oh, then I intreat you, guard, carefully guard againſt the beginnings of

of vice. Keep ever much within the ſtrict boundaries of holineſs. Avoid the very *appearance of evil.* And reſolve with the patriarch Job, *I will not remove my integrity from me, until I die.*

The third and laſt danger of which it belongs to my ſubject to advertiſe you, reſults from the incomprehenſible power of habit and cuſtom. I ſhall ſay little upon this head. It is more commonly obſerved, and more obvious to the meaneſt capacity, than either of the particulars upon which I have already deſcanted. You all know enough of it to alarm every thinking man, to alarm yourſelves, if ye beſtowed upon it a moment's conſideration. One of the moſt ſtriking proofs of it reſts in this indiſputable fact. That after the natural bias to any crime be worn off, that after its original allurements be vaniſhed

vaniſhed away; the propenſity will frequently remain as ſtrong as ever.

"Cuſtom," it is ſaid, "is a ſecond "nature." And will you not be careful what it is that you thus inweave in your conſtitution, ingrain with the very faculties of your ſoul? Our bleſſed Lord has told us, that to part with it will be to cut off a right arm, to pluck out a right eye. Can ye promiſe yourſelves, that ye ſhall ever perform a taſk ſo arduous, againſt which nature ſo much revolts? If ye could, would ye wantonly, for a momentary gratification, bring upon yourſelves a pain, a labour, a torment like this? Oh, that I could inſcribe as with *a pen of iron* upon each one of your hearts thoſe words of the prophet: *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his*

his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil.

But I have done. Ye perceive how from the decreaſing ſenſibility of conſcience, from the imperceptible progreſs of vice, from the ſtupendous power of habit, danger ariſes. Fitly indeed is the ſtate of a good man in the world, deſcribed as a ſtate of warfare. Ye ſee then what is before you. Will you becauſe of the formidable array that is drawn out againſt you, tamely reſign the joys of eternity, tamely conſign yourſelves over to everlaſting deſtruction? If not, remember that a paſſive reſolution, an uneffective wiſh, will ſtand you in little ſtead. You muſt *be watchful*; you muſt *put on the whole armour of God*; you muſt approve yourſelves *good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt.*

Chriſt. It was a failure here that made Eliſha weep for Hazael. It was a failure here that made our ſaviour weep over the city of Jeruſalem. My friends, I know of no thought more wonderful, of no motive more awakening, than the redeemer's tears over the finally impenitent. Chriſt has aſſured us of a mercy extending to the *ſins of the whole world.* His ſalvation is proffered unto all. It is even within your reach. If you fail of it, the tears of Jeſus ſhall ſeal your deſtruction. He will not ſave thoſe who refuſe to obey him. But he will pity your folly; commiſerate your unhappy ſelf-choſen lot; and drop a tear upon the warrant of your condemnation. Good God! and ſhall Jeſus do ſo much, advance ſo far, and ſtoop ſo low; and will ye treat him with contumely,

tumely, and *tread under foot the ſon of God?* He will not always ſubmit to your indignities; he will not be always mocked: he will *awake in his wrath, and tear you to pieces, and there ſhall be none to deliver.*

SER-

SERMON III.

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF JESUS.

SERMON III.

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF JESUS.

LUKE xxii. 61.

And the lord turned, and looked upon Peter.——

ONE of the principal advantages of hiſtory conſiſts in its correſpondence to that celebrated definition of it by one of the ancients, that it is "philoſophy teaching by example." The force of example above that of precept, is well known and remarked even to a proverb. But the examples that fall immediately under our own

notice, are rare and confined; and thoſe preſented by fiction, are by that very means deprived of half their force and efficacy. It is hiſtory alone that ſupplies all theſe defects, and furniſhes inſtances as numerous as they are true, as pertinent as they are numerous. But of the various departments of this ſcience, there is none ſo thoroughly calculated to produce the fulleſt effect, as that of biography. In the developement of ſingle characters, our attention is not diverted to a variety of objects, we deſcend into the moſt ſecret receſſes of private life, and trace the heart through all its mazes. Of conſequence, ſubjects like theſe, do, as it were, ſo urge and inflame every power of the ſoul that it is ſcarce practicable to attempt a reſiſtance. The hiſtory of our lord and ſaviour, Jeſus Chriſt, the moſt glorious and inimitable

ble character the world ever beheld, is of this kind.

Still further. Example is not the ſole end of hiſtory. To enlarge and ennoble the human mind, to fill it with the ſublimeſt attachment to it's moſt generous benefactors, the patrons of virtue and liberty, who have ſacrificed their own exiſtence to render happy and honourable that of their brethren, is no mean advantage reſulting from this ſcience. And of all it's branches, the hiſtory of our own country is in this reſpect the moſt intereſting. We love thoſe beſt who have benefited us the moſt immediately. But Chriſt has not only purchaſed a more general good, but a good infinitely more ſolid to every individual, than any of our fellow creatures did ever confer. His hiſtory then appears

upon all accounts the moſt worthy our attention, and that from which the moſt ſalutary effects might be expected. It is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the affections it is calculated to inſpire, muſt work the moſt amazing revolutions in the breaſt of it's admirers, and form, in a manner, the principal ſpring and governing end of all their actions. And what ſpring, or what end can be more glorious and deſirable? If none; then can nothing ſo truly demand our attention, or ſo wiſely employ our time and our induſtry.—You will then I doubt not with pleaſure accompany me in the making a few brief reflections on the well known ſtory of Peter's repentance. There is no circumſtance in the life of Jeſus, that is better calculated to diſplay all the amiable traits of his character.

It

It was in the moment of his agony in the garden, that in the immediate foreſight of their deſertion, Chriſt thus pathetically addreſſed his diſciples. *All of ye ſhall this night be offended becauſe of me: they ſhall ſmite the ſhepherd, and the ſheep ſhall be ſcattered.* But Peter, naturally ſanguine in his temper, was diſpleaſed at the inſinuation, ungenerous in his idea, which the words conveyed. Puffed up with a confident opinion of his own intrepidity he arrogantly diſclaims the very thought. *Though all men ſhould be offended in thee, yet will not I.* But Jeſus, who knew the diſgrace into which he was about to fall, gently reproves him.

The moment approaches. Judas betrays the ſon of man with a kiſs. The ſoldiers of the high prieſt draw near to arreſt him. "Now," imagines

the exulting Peter, " now is the deci-
" ſive hour. It belongs to me at this
" inſtant to ſhow my attachment. In
" our own defence we will draw our
" ſwords. We will overpower the
" guards. We will ruſh to victory
" and acclamation. Jeſus ſhall be our
" king. Jeſus ſhall be our king. *The*
" *kingdom ſhall at this time be reſtored*
" *to Iſrael.*" Alas! Peter, how fond and how palpable is thy miſtake! Shall this be the kingdom of the ſelf-denying Jeſus? This the fate of him who ſo repeatedly foretold his own crucifixion? If he be the ſon of God can he lie? Or, if the ſon of man, can he be the promiſed Meſſiah? No: deluded mortal! Far other ſcenes are prepared for him. Far other trials for thee; trials that ſhall call for a calmer courage, and more inflexible reſolution. A momentary boldneſs thou-

ſands

ſands can command. It is "the firm "fixed ſoul, that right and truth de- "mands," that braves all danger, and meets unſhaken "the cruſh of worlds" in the purſuit of rectitude,—it is that man alone that merits the title of a genuine diſciple.—But the mind of Peter is too much agitated to give place to all theſe reflections, and he ruſhes at once with generous imprudence on the ſwords of his enemies. He wounds them. Jeſus is once more obliged to reſtrain the unmanageable impetuoſity of his temper, and to heal the wound of the enraged ſervant.—No ſooner is Peter diſarmed, than they all ruſh in at once and ſeize his maſter. *Then all the diſciples forſook him and fled.* John only juſt keeps him in ſight, unwilling quite to deſert the maſter, who had diſtinguiſhed him by ſuch a peculiar affection.—Where is Peter now?—

His

His courage is ſomewhat cooled. He doth not forſake him indeed. He follows, but at an immenſe diſtance. Sad omen of what he was about to perform!—The calmer trial of bonds and impriſonment, of whips and ſcourges and the ſword of the executioner, leſs ſuit theſe fiery tempers than the death of the field, and the paſſionate combat of hand to hand, inſuring inſtantaneous victory or defeat.—He enters the palace however, and mingles with the ſervants of the high prieſt. In the mean time the death of Chriſt is conſpired.—At this inſtant one approaches our voluntary champion, and terrifies him with the queſtion, *Art thou alſo with Jeſus of Nazareth?* And who is it that affrights him? Surely ſome ſurly ruffian, whoſe trade had been blood and murder, till his very features were ſtiffened into horror. Or ſome lictor, commiſſioned

commiſſioned by the magiſtrate, immediately, if his ſuſpicion proved true, to lead him to the torture. No: but a harmleſs ſervant maid, who is tempted to the queſtion merely by idle curioſity. Alas then! and is this the man who boaſted ſo highly of his attachment and affection, who juſt now drew his ſword at ſo mighty odds, to attack the ſurrounding guards?—But he was not yet fallen low enough! The queſtion was preſently after again put by another ſervant. He denies the charge with ſcorn. *I know not the man.*—Alas, Peter, how poor an artifice! *Thy ſpeech betrayeth thee:* thy very accent ſhows the dialogue of the Galilean. Nay, but *he began to curſe and to ſwear, ſaying, I know not him of whom you ſpeak.* He is not contented now with ſimply denying him. As the ſuſpicion is repeated, his fears increaſe. Having once deviated

viated from the plain road of honour and honeſty, he is prepared to aſſert his devious path with all his might. He abhors, he reprobates the idea. He loſes patience at the thought. And now behold him in the maſk of a fiend, begin to curſe and to ſwear, to uſe the vileſt and moſt profligate language; affirming, I know not the man. Oh, Peter! is it not enough that thou ſhouldeſt deny thy maſter, that thou ſhouldeſt pretend to ſcorn and deſpiſe him now in the hour of difficulty and diſtreſs: Muſt thou alſo put off the language of a man? Muſt thou adopt a language fit only for the gloomy inhabitants of the fabled Tartarus? My friends, it can only be the prerogative of ſuch as theſe, wretched prerogative! to curſe, and to ſwear, and blaſpheme the "ſanctities of heaven." You will not ſurely defraud ſuch miſerable wretches?

wretches? You will not advance ſo large a ſtep to the participation of ſo deteſtable a character.

But enough. It was only that his iniquity might appear to him in the moſt horrid colours, and of the blackeſt dye, that Peter was allowed to deſcend to the reprobate uſe of oaths and curſes. He was not meaned to be deſerted. His preſent wretched fall was only the ſchool to train him in maturer times for the reſolution of a martyr. He was taught in the moſt feeling manner to underſtand his own inſufficiency. He was taught to ſet light by his ſo apparently firm reſolves, and to be diffident of his own perſeverance. It was now then time to reclaim him. But to this his maſter alone was equal. Let us then recur to his ſituation.

His

His period on earth was now arrived. His hour was fully come. He had paſſed through the world, it's ſcorn and buffets; he had long lain under the moſt ignominious reproaches. He had long wandered not having *where to lie his head*. He ſaw his inveterate enemies, not contented with libelling his perſon, and blackening his morals, —he ſaw them touching him ſtill nearer, reflecting on the power by which his miracles were wrought, and *blaſpheming the holy Ghoſt*.—He now indeed drew to the period of his courſe. Not to the repoſe and tranquility ſo much to be deſired after being wearied out with ſufferings. No: but to blacker ſcenes, and to ſufferings of a deeper dye. Under the contemplation of ſuch ſcenes, his fleſh panted, his ſpirit failed, *he was in an agony*. Scarcely rouſed from the diſmal ſcene by al-

mighty

mighty aid, Judas, one of the choſen few whom he had appointed to be neareſt his perſon, approaches to betray him into the hands of his bittereſt enemies. The reſt, amazed and affrighted, diſperſe themſelves and fly. Jeſus is left alone. Thus deſerted and forlorn, he is led to the palace of the high prieſt. Upon his arrival the pontiff and his friends retire to conſult the moſt effectual means of deſtroying him. He in the mean time remains without to wait the reſult of their malicious conference. In this ſituation, we might look to ſee him wholly immerſed in anxiety and terror about his approaching fate. But no: Even this is not permitted him by the inhuman ſoldiery. Inured to the contemplation of diſtreſs, and ſteeled againſt all reflection, they mock and buffet, they inſult and ſpit upon their innocent charge.

charge. Under this complication of diſtreſs, he muſt be excuſed in not attending to the ungrateful Peter. It ſhould ſeem ſcarcely poſſible to act otherwiſe.—But no, you know not Jeſus. His attention is not for a moment diverted from the critical ſituation of his diſciple. It was with difficulty he ſuffered him to proceed thus far unnoticed. But now, when the proper criſis was arrived, he delays no longer. Though Peter curſe, and ſwear, and deny his maſter with contumely, yet *the lord turned and looked upon* him. It was the moſt eloquent look in the world. His own guilt and ingratitude, the unexampled goodneſs of his maſter, and the inſolent boaſts he had uttered, riſe up at once and ſtare the unmanly ſwearer in the face. He *went out and wept bitterly.*

Let

Let us attend a little to the expreſſion we may ſuppoſe to have been conveyed in our ſaviour's countenance. It was eloquent; let us hearken to it's language. Though imperfectly repreſented, there is ſomething in it ſo peculiar, that it cannot chooſe but have ſome effect upon us. Let it ſtand thus. "Alas, Peter! and are all thy boaſts, "and is all thy confidence reduced to "this? Canſt thou who erewhile waſt "ſo bold and courageous, now trem-"ble at the voice of a harmleſs wo-"man? thou who profeſſedſt ſuch a "diſtinguiſhed attachment, now de-"ſert me ſo remarkably? Art thou "picqued and diſguſted at the very "mention of my name? Art thou "driven to the unmanly uſe of oaths "and curſes in order to clear thyſelf "from ſuch an aſperſion? Oh, Peter! "recollect thyſelf before it be too late.

" Thou haſt profeſſed thyſelf my diſ-
" ciple: haſt ſubmitted to inſult and
" ignominy for my ſake: *haſt left all*
" *and followed me.* Thou profeſſedſt
" to believe me *the Chriſt, the ſon of the*
" *living God.* What have I done to
" forfeit that character? If nothing;
" is not the profeſſion of the promiſed
" Meſſiah, worth a few dangers and
" ſufferings? Will not the deſertion
" and denial of him blaſt thy name
" with eternal infamy, and deliver over
" thy perſon to *everlaſting contempt?*
" Oh, then, be awakened by every
" motive of honour, of gratitude and
" intereſt, to return from this ſo ſhame-
" ful backſliding, to repent, to reform,
" and perſevere to the end. Thus alone
" canſt thou be truly my diſciple."
What heart, circumſtanced as Peter's
was, but would have melted at ſo pa-
thetic an addreſs? Who could have

acte-

acted otherwiſe than he did, could have refrained from *going out and weeping bitterly.*"

But there is one reflection that brings all this home to our buſineſs and boſoms. The ſaviour is not dead. The ſaviour is not departed. His attention is not diverted from the meaneſt of his diſciples. He is with us *always even to the end of the world.* Whenever we diſhonour our profeſſion, or deviate from the path of duty; whenever we deny our God, or by our actions reject the reign of the Meſſiah, we may conceive of Chriſt as caſting upon us alſo this moving look, and of our iniquity as more inveterate than that of Peter, if we ſubmit not to its influence. The preſent exaltation no more than the paſt ſufferings of the redeemer withdraw his attention or divert the com-

paſſions of his heart from his ſuffering ſervants. Frequently, alas! do we in one mode or other copy Peter's fall. Let us alſo imitate his repentance. And in order to our doing this aright, let us attend to that benign aſpect, which effected ſo marvellous a revolution in the breaſt of Peter, and which we may ſuppoſe in like manner turned upon ourſelves. Briefly to aſſiſt us in forming an imperfect conception of the regards of a ſaviour, ſhall be the endeavour of that which remains of the preſent diſcourſe. And in order to this, let us attempt a diſtinct delineation of the ſentiments, that might be expreſſed in his countenance upon ſuch an occaſion.

Thoſe ſubjects have been moſt eagerly ſought by painters for the full diſplay of their art which call forth the greateſt

greateſt variety of expreſſion in a ſingle countenance. And in this view the ſtory of that Brutus who condemned his own children to death for a conſpiracy againſt his country has been recommended by a judicious critic, as the nobleſt ſubject of painting that hiſtory has produced. The ſtrife between parental affection, the intreaties of his children, and thoſe of their mother on the one hand; and that ardent patriotiſm and love of juſtice on the other, which had already rendered him the inſtrument of delivering his country from tyranny, muſt have produced the moſt viſible and moſt honourable emotion in his countenance, and would in a ſkilful hand have had the moſt marked effect. Here two paſſions of the moſt generous nature ſtrove for victory; but in the caſe before us we may trace no leſs than four

apparently oppoſite ſentiments, which harmoniouſly coincided, without ſtrife and without contention. Anger againſt ſin, compaſſion for the ſinner, pardon of his frailty, and a perſuaſive of the firſt order to repentance and amendment. Oh, then, for the pencil of a Raphael, that we might properly deſcribe the harmonious diſcord, the nameleſs graces that adorn the countenance of our redeemer!

And the firſt thing there expreſſed is anger againſt ſin. The more perfectly the natures of virtue and vice are underſtood the more will the one be admired and the other deteſted. Hence the Supreme being is repreſented in Scripture as hating ſin *with a perfect hatred.* And we cannot conceive of the redeemer of mankind, the beloved of the Father, the pattern of every

ſpotleſs

ſpotleſs excellence, but as partaking of theſe feelings in a very high degree. In what humiliation, in what ſuffering did not our follies, and our crimes involve him? Jeſus partook of all the ſinleſs infirmities of his brethren. And think you, when his every limb trembled with agony, and his languid viſage was ſtained with drops of blood, that he was not then awakened to the moſt lively regret, that ever mortal creatures ſhould have dared to depart from the obedience of their creator? His character was peculiarly gentle and ſociable. And is it not obvious to imagine, that the deſertion of his choſen friends in the hour of his greateſt neceſſity, and his being left alone in a conflict he ſo much dreaded, came home to him with particular aggravation? Yes, my friends, the eye of Jeſus in ſuch a moment as this, could not but

convey ſomething of the dignity of innocence, and the reproach of violated friendſhip.

But ſecondly; the ſentiment moſt immediately contraſted with this, and which falls next under our conſideration, is that of compaſſion for the ſinner. The ſinner is always to him that has large and elevated views of things an object of compaſſion. Impotence and blindneſs are the parents of vice. A being, that never feels himſelf weak and limited, can have no temptation to do amiſs. He, that is a ſtranger to narrow and partial proſpects, will be at all times ſenſible that virtue is his trueſt intereſt. And who will not pity the feeble mind, that ruſhes blindfold upon miſery? With reſpect to Jeſus, it was the favourite employment of his life to reclaim the wandering. *He came*

came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.—And his coward diſciple has ſomething ſtrangely intereſting in his ſtory, that could not fail to engage the compaſſion of his maſter. His haughty declarations of firmneſs convince us, that he was no ſtranger to the love of virtue. We have an attachment, and an indulgence for generous raſhneſs, that we are not apt to feel for the timid, and the irreſolute. A mind of this texture, it is eaſy for us to ſee, even when moſt erroneous, has materials in it, that are capable of being faſhioned to the nobleſt purpoſes. And ſhall ſuch a mind be loſt? Shall ſuch qualities only ſerve to ſink their unfortunate poſſeſſor deeper in perdition?

But a third expreſſion of the countenance of Jeſus I have ſtated to be that of pardon. We know how ready he was upon

upon all occaſions to forgive. He forgave his perſecutors and his murderers. But this is not preciſely the forgiveneſs to which I meaned to allude. I intended to be underſtood rather of that gentle and benign forgiveneſs, that he was appointed to diſpenſe in the name of the Father. And never did he meet with a more ſuitable occaſion for the exerciſe of his commiſſion. He was acquainted with the generous ſpirit of his diſciple. He knew that had he expreſſed nothing but ſtern reproof, and chearleſs pity, Peter would have died with ſhame and remorſe. But *the prince that was exalted* to diſpenſe *remiſſion* to our race, knew not to confine his admonition to ſentiments like theſe. He looked conſolation and aſſurance. His ſpeaking eye told of immortal clemency and eternal manſions. The dignity and grace of him,

who

who was lord of the inviſible world, beamed through the ſoul of his contrite ſervant.

And need we after all this add in the laſt place, that a perſuaſive to repentance and amendment is moſt ſtrongly included in the admonitory look of our redeemer? We might infer this from the effect; *Peter went out and wept bitterly*. We may with much brighter evidence infer it from what has been already ſaid. "Knoweſt thou not how "hateful is ſin, and in what bitter trials "the gracious ſcheme of it's abolition "has involved thy lord? Seeſt thou "not how inglorious is the breach of "all thy oſtentatious promiſes, how "baſe the denial in a moment like "this of ſuch a maſter as I have been? "Oh, then, from hence reſume thy "character and diſplay thy conſtancy.

"Though

"Though thou couldeſt abjure me, "yet thou ſeeſt that in all my diſtreſs, "I could not forget thee. Be not diſ- "couraged. Thou haſt not yet loſt "the affection of thy maſter. Thou "art aſſured of mercy and oblivion "from thy God. Let theſe conſider- "ations animate thee. Let the diſ- "treſs and anguiſh in which thou art "now involved be a beacon to warn "thee from future diſgrace. Thou "mayeſt yet redeem thy character. "Thou mayeſt yet approve thyſelf "manly, generous and faithful. Oh, "ſeize with ardour the opportunity "that remains." All theſe things, my friends, are expreſſed in our ſaviour's countenance. And what can be more endearing, what more perſuaſive?

And now I muſt conclude all with the plain and obvious application at which

which I before hinted. *What I ſay unto thee I ſay unto all. No ſcripture is of private interpretation.* The look which Chriſt in the inſtance before us caſts upon Peter, the ſame look he caſts upon every one of us whenever we backſlide. We blame Peter's denial of his maſter with one accord, but we ourſelves ſhall be infinitely more blameable, if we do not like Peter repent at the regards of Jeſus. We wonder not at Peter's tears when touched at the ſight of the countenance of his lord. Let us weep like him, leſt we be made the wonder and contempt of men and angels another day. *Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.* Oh! if the awful, the tender, the pathetic regards of thy redeemer will not awaken thee to repentance, thou haſt indeed a heart of ſtone. Surely nothing is wanting but attention. Think

on

on theſe things. "Read them by day "and meditate by night." Beſeech almighty God to take away *the heart of ſtone* and give thee *a heart of fleſh. Oh! that thou mighteſt know, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace.* Then ſhalt thou experience, *not the ſorrow of this world which worketh death, but that godly ſorrow which worketh repentance never to be repented of,* which ſhall carry thee ſafely through the trials of this world, and introduce thee to manſions of eternal bliſs beyond the grave.

SER-

SERMON IV.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

SERMON IV.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

MATTHEW XXVII. 42.

He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave.—

IT was a common ſarcaſm thrown out by the Jews upon the primitive Chriſtians, that they were the diſciples of a crucified Jeſus. "We "looked," ſay they, "for a prophet "of honour; but this man is a car-"penter. We looked for one of the "ſeed of David; but he is a Nazarene. "We looked for a man of conſpicuous "virtue; but he aſſociateth with pub-

" licans and ſinners." Thus far it is well. But they cloſe the liſt with the moſt triumphant, the moſt deciſive circumſtance of all. " The ancient " prophets had taught us to look for a " victorious prince, one who ſhould " free us from every, the ſmalleſt to- " ken of ſubjugation, who ſhould *lead* " *captivity captive, and receive gifts from* " *men.* But this man dies, dies like " the vileſt of malefactors, dies the " moſt ignominious and accurſed " death, is crucified."

My friends, you cannot but recollect the many demonſtrations, that have been exhibited of the wiſdom of the Chriſtian ſcheme. And this point once eſtabliſhed; that the appearances of wiſdom do not, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, lie upon the ſurface, is perhaps an additional advantage. We might

expect

expect an impoſture to indulge in the ſublime, and to adorn itſelf with the grave, the reverend and the acceptable things of this world. We might aſſure ourſelves, that it would not give into the weak, the deſpiſed, and the mortifying in preference to theſe. But *God's ways are not as our ways, neither our thoughts his thoughts. We preach*, ſaith the apoſtle, and this is the capital illuſtration of our maxim, *Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs. And God forbid*, ſaith he, *that I ſhould glory, ſave in this croſs, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.* This, which the world fixes upon us, as a badge of laſting infamy and contempt, we joyfully receive as a badge of the trueſt honour. This, which the Jews caſt upon us, as the bittereſt ſarcaſm that malice could invent, we adopt for our

favourite motto, for the maxim by which we wiſh our whole lives to be governed. We are the diſciples of a crucified ſaviour, therefore will we not be *conformed to the world*, therefore will we *take up* our *croſs*, *and follow*, chearfully follow, *him who died for us*, *and roſe again*.

Recollecting theſe things you muſt be convinced that your attention cannot be too often called to that wonderful ſcene, which is to be regarded as the conſummation of the goſpel. You ſhall not, you cannot blame me, if I make it the ſubject of a thouſand diſcourſes. I am convinced, and every real Chriſtian muſt ſet to his ſeal that it is true, that this is the moſt practical ſubject in the world. The man that is not moved by a ſight of Jeſus, ſuſpended upon the croſs,—do you expect me

me to ſay is immoveable as the gates of heaven, is inſenſible as the devouring crocodile?—I will not ſay it. I will tell you of a ſcene, where he ſhall tremble and turn pale, where he ſhall feel his very heart ſink within him, and his fleſh creep along his bones, while the Chriſtian ſhall ſtand firm and unſhaken, ſerene as light, and complacent as the very countenance of the Divinity. When the *foundations of the earth ſhall be moved*, when the *heavens ſhall be wrapped up as a ſcrowl, and the elements melt with fervent heat*, when a throne ſhall be erected in the ſkies and the whole world ſummoned to hear their final doom from him, that ſitteth thereon. Till then, my friends, till there be no ſpace left for repentance, he ſhall remain inſenſible indeed. The arguments of a Plato, and the impetuous eloquence of a Demoſthenes might

urge his ſoul in vain. Theſe, my friends, are ſhadows, are non-entities, compared with the argument of a dying lord, and the rhetoric of a ſaviour ſuſpended upon a croſs. It is then in diſcourſing on this ſubject, that repetitions are graceful, and tautology ceaſes to be a blemiſh. But why do I talk of repetitions and tautology? The ſubject is truly inexhauſtible. And though I were indeed to open it in a thouſand diſcourſes, it would be my fault, and not that of the croſs, if you were preſented with one repetition and one tautology.

The words we have choſen for the ſubject of our preſent meditations you will find by the context to be the concluſion of all thoſe bitter taunts and blaſphemous revilings which Jeſus ſuffered from the ſons of men. It were impoſſible,

impoſſible, *the world would not contain the books that might be written*, were we to enumerate and explain all the inſtances of this kind with which the hiſtories of the evangeliſts abound. Shall I turn you then to their inſults upon his character, their little plots to confound his prudence, their unworthy conceptions of his heavenly father, or their aſcriptions of the *inſignia* of the holy ſpirit to *Beelzebub*, *the prince of devils?* Do you wiſh to be reminded of the mean purchaſe of thirty pieces of ſilver, of the crown of thorns, the ſceptral reed, and ſcarlet robe, or of the dreadful and wanton imprecation, the effects of which they afterwards ſo ſeverely experienced, *His blood be upon us and our children?* I hope of theſe and many other the like circumſtances you have a complete recollection: it is neceſſary for me, at this time, as I would

not exceed the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe, to take up the ſtory no higher than the moment of his being delivered up by Pilate to the fury of the multitude that he might be crucified.

The Supreme being had by a wonderful, and apparently predetermined concourſe of events, forced from the judge this extraordinary declaration at the moment in which he condemned Jeſus, *I have found in him nothing worthy of death, he is* an innocent, he is *a juſt perſon.* By an emblematical performance he could beſt inform the tumultuous multitude. *He called for water and waſhed his hands, ſaying, I am clear of his blood.* Pitiful evaſion! Did he diſcern his merit and his virtue, and ought he not to have exerted an inflexible reſolution, and have ſaved him from the irrational frenzy, from the unrelenting

relenting malice of the envious rulers, and miſguided people? Pitiful evaſion! He knew, they could not take his blood, they could not put him to death, without making uſe of his authority, who therefore did in fact regularly paſs ſentence upon him. You think his conduct then unaccountable. One word will unravel the myſtery. He had oppreſſed the people. He had wrung

" From the hard hand of peaſants their vile
" traſh
" By indirection."

He had defrauded the government. He had taken bribes. By theſe means he was become obnoxious to puniſhment from his ſuperiors. He feared not the people. He feared the rulers. They might, if affronted, if diſappointed, carry theſe accuſations to the court

of

of Tiberius, and ruin him for ever. For this reaſon he dared not refuſe them whatever they had ſet their hearts upon. Thus it is, my friends, that one ſin by indiſſoluble connection leads on to another, and a Pilate, who has ſubmitted to take bribes from thoſe ſubjected to his juriſdiction, is involved by an almoſt infallible neceſſity in the guilt of thoſe who crucified the lord of glory.

Given up to crucifixion, the crown of thorns, the ſceptral reed, and ſcarlet robe are no longer thought neceſſary to render him ſufficiently miſerable or contemptible. They clothe him in his own garments. They lead him towards Golgotha. Some of his former friends, the women, who were found upon this occaſion more courageous than the apoſtles, follow him, wailing

wailing and lamenting. " Such in " that moment as in all the paſt," he neglects his own ſufferings, he forgets his own ſorrows, and turns round that he might exhort them to firmneſs. " *Daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for* " *me, but weep*"—he had juſt heard the unanimous execration of his thoughtleſs countrymen—" *for yourſelves and* " *your children. For the days are coming* " *when they ſhall ſay, Bleſſed are the bar-* " *ren, the womb that never bare, the* " *breaſt that never gave ſuck.*—Such as " you now ſee are my ſufferings. What " then ſhall be done to my followers? " *The ſervant is not above his lord.* What " ſhall be done to my wretched coun- " trymen, who refuſe the ſalvation that " is brought home to them, who re- " ject ſuch miracles as are indiſputable " proofs of a divine miſſion, who *ſtone* " *the prophets, and ſlay them who are ſent*

" *unto*

"*unto them? If theſe things be done in the* "*green tree, what ſhall be done in the* "*dry?*" Having thus taken occaſion with his laſt words to prepare them for the dreadful events which awaited their ſtate and nation, he proceeds along the fatal path.

It has been diſputed among the commentators, whether the cup now offered to Jeſus, were adminiſtered ſarcaſtically by the ſoldiers, or were preſented to him by his friends, to benumb his ſenſations under the cruel puniſhment he was about to ſuffer. But it is not my buſineſs to deſcend into criticiſms. Let the offered cup be what it will, we find our ſaviour refuſe to drink. If it were held forth by way of bitter jeſt, it became our divine maſter thus meekly to refuſe it. If it were a kind ſtupefying potion it was not

not fit for him, who was intended for our example under the ſevereſt trials, and the reigning maxim of whoſe life was reſignation.

He was now to be faſtened to the accurſed tree. While this dreadful office is performing for him, let us aſk how is Jeſus employed? In horrid ſhrieks and dolorous groans? Far otherwiſe. He ſighs forth a gentle prayer for his executioners, "*Father, forgive them!*" He adds the only poſſible extenuation of their crime, "*They know not what they do!*" Bleſſed Jeſus, was it not enough that cut off in the prime of life, by an unjuſt and ignominious death, ſuffering the greateſt tortures that the invention of tyrants, ever fertile in cruelty, could produce, thou ſhouldſt endure all this meekly, *as a ſheep before his ſhearers is dumb*, ſo not even

even open thy mouth; but muſt thou alſo, who *by wicked hands* waſt *crucified and ſlain*, in the moment of thy greateſt bodily anguiſh, offer up a prayer for thy very murderers? *Even ſo, lord, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.* But ſuch conduct needs no comment. Comment would but diſgrace it. Let it then ſpeak for itſelf; ſpeak, as it ſtrongly muſt, to the genuine feelings of every human heart.

But you are contented. The ſaviour hath ſuffered enough. This you think properly concludes the diſmal tale. Alas, my friends! this is but the beginning of ſorrow. Let us then purſue the ſcene. It is our buſineſs to be crucified with Jeſus, that we may alſo riſe with him. He is now tied down for life. Here then we may expect to follow, what does indeed follow

in

in all it's gloomy pomp of horrors, the daſtard's triumph. The lion is in the toils, *the ſtrong man* armed, who erewhile held his goods in peace, and kept each ill looked ruffian at an awful diſtance, is now fallen upon by one ſtronger than he, who *binds* his perſon, and who *ſpoils his goods*.—Who then you aſk me is ſtronger than the ſaviour? Is Caiaphas, is Herod, is Pilate, is mighty Cæſar, or imperial Rome? Alas, my friends! theſe are but as flax burned with fire before our heaven born Sampſon. But I will tell you who is ſtronger. I will tell you before whom this mighty monarch bows his head. The Father omnipotent. He had ſworn to perform all his will. He ſubmitteth without a ſigh even to the death at his bidding. *No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myſelf; I have power to lay it down and have*

power

power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

When the Jewiſh prieſthood had obtained of Pilate to put the ſaviour of mankind to the death of the croſs; this indeed was the accompliſhment of their main purpoſe, but it did not ſuffice to glut their revenge. They hold forth in one hand cruelty and torture, and in the other inſult and ignominy. It was not enough to ſpit upon and to ſcourge him, it was not enough to crown him with thorns, it was not enough to pierce his hands and his feet with nails; but they muſt ſcoff at him, they muſt treat him with taunt and irony, they muſt execute along with him a thief and a murderer.—Come with me, and let us view the croſs. There hangs Jeſus, a man, the mildeſt and the gentleſt, the pureſt and the holieſt,

holieſt, the moſt generous and beneficent that ever breathed. And on either hand a pair of rugged ſouls, whoſe trade was villany, and who ſubſiſted on the diſtreſſes of mankind. Look back to their paſt lives. He ever employed in alleviating the woes, in ſoftening the diſtreſs, and removing the oppreſſive burdens of mankind about him. They terrifying the benighted traveller, burſting the bars of the peaceful manſion, diſſolving the bonds of civil ſociety, and ſpreading deſolation and helpleſs miſery, wherever they come. Look forward to their preſent feelings. He forgetting his own ſorrows, to pity the women that followed, to comfort his diſconſolate mother, and to weep over the impending deſtruction of his country. They wrapped up in corporal feelings, writhing their tortured limbs, and

viewing all around them with horror and deteſtation. He breathing out a prayer for his murderers; they burſting with oaths and execration and blaſphemy. Did you ever ſee ſuch an aſſemblage? Did hiſtory ever paint ſuch a ſcene? Did the wildeſt fancy ever conceive any thing ſo diſcordant and ſo pitiable? And what ſouls then had they that invented it? What hands had they that carried it into execution? What eyes had they that beheld it with ſupineneſs and indifference?

He is nailed to the croſs. Thou unjuſt judge, ye people, ye ſoldiers, ye malefactors, and ye, worſe than all, malicious prieſts and rulers, draw near! Now is the time that you may upbraid the ſufferer, and caſt your bitter taunts before him in coward ſafety. Pilate inſcribeth over him, "This, ſirs,

"*Behold*

"*Behold the man! this is the king of the* "*Jews.*" *They that paſſed by, railed at him, wagging the head,* ſhooting the lip, and ſaying, "*Ah, thou that deſtroyeſt the temple* "*and buildeſt it in three days, ſave thyſelf!*" *The thieves who were crucified with him caſt the ſame in his teeth.* The ſoldiers ſit down calmly at the foot of the croſs, and watch the body, and part the garments. They offer him in his diſtreſs *vinegar to drink.* Thus far it is as we might perhaps have expected.

It is related of the great earl of Eſſex when he was beheaded, that ſir Walter Raleigh, who had ever been his ſworn enemy, could not in that diſtreſsful moment, deny himſelf the ungenerous pleaſure, of ſtanding at a private window unſeen, and beholding the exit of his once ſo dreaded foe. That a man of rank ſhould ſtoop to ſo

mean a thing, that a brave man ſhould wiſh for ſo inhuman a triumph, muſt for ever ſtamp his character, with indelible diſgrace. But he poſſeſſed but an inſignificant portion of the ſpirit manifeſted by the prieſts and rulers in the goſpel. He was but a private man. They the heads of the ſtate. He ſtood unſeen, conſcious as it were of his miſdeed. They approach openly to the very foot of the croſs. Laſtly, he made not himſelf viſible to the ſufferer, nor ſought to diſturb the ſerenity of his laſt moments. They join with the mob in all their ſenſeleſs revilings, they cry out, "*He ſaved others; himſelf* "*he cannot ſave.*"

It is not neceſſary for me to expatiate upon each of the inſults offered to our bleſſed lord. They are all ſummed up, maliciouſly, cruelly ſummed up, in

in the inſult of the rulers, which we for that reaſon adopted for the text of this diſcourſe. It properly cloſes the ſcene. Afterwards the curtain immediately drops. *Darkneſs* is ſpread *over the whole land.* What follows it was impoſſible to deſcribe in the language of man. We can only form a moſt imperfect idea of it, from the dreadful lamentation it extorted from the redeemer.—But this lies beyond the boundaries of our ſubject. Let us confine ourſelves in what remains of the diſcourſe to the words of our text. Properly underſtood, they at the ſame time exhibit in the ſpeakers a conduct at once ungenerous and abſurd, and afford a ground to ourſelves for the trueſt, the moſt unfeigned gratitude.

Let us then in the firſt place endeavour very briefly to inveſtigate their

true meaning, detached from the application the Jews might then, or we might now give them.—*He ſaved others.* Theſe words refer to the many cures of every kind performed by him during the courſe of his miniſtry. *The blind receiving their ſight, the lame walking, the lepers being cleanſed, the deaf hearing, the dead riſing, and the poor having the goſpel preached to them.—Himſelf he cannot ſave.* This they infer from the plain fact, which may be turned thus, *Himſelf he* did *not ſave.* The man who performed all theſe wonderful miracles, muſt ſurely in the natural courſe of things be able to ſave himſelf from death. Why doth he not then? Is it becauſe this ability is now unaccountably taken from him, as their words ſeem to imply, or for any other reaſon?

Theſe then being the ſentiments implied in the words, taken in their literal

ral and grammatical ſenſe, let us proceed, in the ſecond place, to conſider them as exhibiting a conduct at once ungenerous and abſurd in the men who uttered them. *He ſaved others.* This they ſpeak ironically.

An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a ſign. Our ſaviour indulged neither one party nor the other. They thought by theſe means to bring the affair to a criſis. If he abſolutely refuſed a ſign, he would tacitly acknowledge his inability, and this were a triumph for his enemies. If he gave them a ſign, ſuch as they wanted, a viſible glory like that on the mount of transfiguration, the multitude would take him by force and make him a king, he would tacitly have acknowledged a character of earthly ſplendour, and this were a triumph for his friends.

Nay even his enemies would probably have come into this. Their chief ground of quarrel with him as he himſelf affirms, was that his *kingdom was not of this world.* They expected a victorious prince; he preſented to their view a ſuffering ſaviour. They expected to be promoted to the higheſt poſts of honour in an earthly kingdom, and to have their ſelf adulation, and the adulation of the multitude re-echoed by a prince of heaven: inſtead of which they are addreſſed with the uncouth language, *How can ye eſcape the damnation of hell?* Who then can bear the dreadful alternative?

My friends, this is the grand key to the long wire-drawn controverſy between Chriſt and the Phariſees, during the whole of his miniſtry. The dilemma to which they led when they aſked

aſked a ſign from heaven, is the dilemma to which they now ſeek to reduce him when ſuſpended on the croſs. "Die there, and let thy name be blot-"ted from under the cope of heaven, "or deſcend among us, and prove "thyſelf indeed a king." They crucify him by way of experiment. Dreadful thought!—*He ſaved others.* This they ſpeak ironically. If he had indeed the miraculous power to which he pretended, let him now prove it. As if ſuch miracles as he wrought needed any other proof to back them. But thus they thought to ſtifle conviction. And now than this conduct what can be more abſurd, what more irrational?

The conduct too is not leſs ungenerous, than abſurd. A thouſand miracles of healing, O bleſſed ſaviour, didſt thou

thou perform among us. Thy beneficent hands were ever ſtretched out for the ſuccour of the wretched. Thy days were all expended in deeds of charity. When with the approach of evening thou reſtedſt thy weary head under the firſt kind cover that fortune preſented, the labour by which thy corporal functions were exhauſted, was the labour of doing good. The characters of other heroes are diſtinguiſhed by ambiguous exploits and ſhining errors. The great features of thine were entirely made up of gentleneſs and forgiveneſs. And now thy mercy, and thy beneficent miracles themſelves are held forth as pretences for the wanton cruelty with which thou art treated. And now thoſe miracles are brought forward as the bittereſt opprobrium that can be caſt upon thee. This is

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the reproach reſerved for thee. *He ſaved others.*

But they go on. They triumph in the ſucceſs of their experiment. *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave.* They attend. They behold the fact. He doth not deſcend from the croſs. From hence they infer he cannot deſcend. Fooliſh incoherent inference! He had already in a thouſand inſtances diſclaimed their character, as they underſtood it, of a victorious prince. He had ſubſtituted that of a ſuffering ſaviour. It was impoſſible he ſhould be what they deſired, and yet deny it. The denial in this caſe was deciſive. And upon his own hypotheſis, *it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings.*

Let

Let me then again aſk, Have we not, here exhibited, a conduct in the higheſt degree ungenerous and abſurd?

But let us go on in the third place to conſider the ground furniſhed to us in theſe laſt days by this fact for the moſt unfeigned gratitude. And little need be ſaid on this head. The ſame topics that account for their blindneſs, point the ſources of our gratitude. Let me add that this is the propereſt improvement of the ſubject.

He ſaved others. Yes, my friends, he did indeed ſave others. And that in a ſenſe the Phariſees little thought of. He ſaved his murderers, the hand that pierced his body, and the tongue that directed his wounds at his bleeding ſoul.

ſoul. *Some of* thoſe very *prieſts believed on him.*—But then how did he ſave others. Even by this very means that he ſaved not himſelf. Had he at their bidding deſcended from the croſs, he had deſerted the name of *Jeſus, a ſaviour*, which was inſcribed over him, and the office of *Jeſus*, the *ſaviour*, which he was then completing. But he choſe rather to bear all their taunts and ironies, and ſuffer affliction, the ſharpeſt, moſt pungent affliction for a ſeaſon, than prove himſelf ſo poor a recreant. He choſe rather to ſuffer all that ſacerdotal malice could inflict, than decline the unrivalled honour of uttering thoſe glorious words, the moſt glorious that ever were uttered, *It is finiſhed.*

As ſoon as Adam fell, we are told of the great ſcheme being formed.

At

At that time were it's firſt manifeſtations. They proceeded in a regular gradation of clearneſs and luſtre for many thouſand years. They met at laſt in a Meſſiah born into the world. And now, hear it, ye heavens, proclaim it, ye angels, be aſtoniſhed, O earth, adore and tremble, ye ſons of men, *It is finiſhed!* Come then, my friends, come *with a perfect heart and a willing mind*, come with haſte, as *the hart* that *panteth after the water brooks*, "nor caſt one longing, lingering "look behind." *It is finiſhed!* He ſaved others; therefore *himſelf he* would *not ſave*. He gave up his own life with readineſs, with chearfulneſs, that he might ſave a world from death. And ſhall we do nothing for ſuch a ſaviour! Oh, let *the love of Chriſt conſtrain us, while we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that*

that he died for all, that they which live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died for them and roſe again.

SER-

SERMON V.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

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THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

JOHN XX. 16.

Jeſus ſaith unto her, Mary.——

LANGUAGE was originally inſtituted for the expreſſing our ideas. If we made each other underſtand the ſentiments we meaned to communicate, it was enough. It mattered not how unadorned, nor even how uncouth were the phraſes in which they were conveyed. But it hath been the fortune of almoſt every art to be extended in its application far beyond the ideas

of its original projector. The ſublimeſt and the nobleſt, to the conception of which the human underſtanding is adequate, will be found to have been invented for the loweſt and moſt mechanical purpoſes. This is their hiſtory. The neceſſities of mankind have been their progenitors, but it hath belonged to eaſe and learned leiſure to bring them to maturity. Thus, my friends, when the firſt deſign of language was completed, and it was become ſufficiently copious for the communication of our ideas, it was then diſcovered, that this of all others was the propereſt vehicle for touching the heart, and gaining over the affections. We were no longer contented to expreſs ourſelves with clearneſs and perſpicuity, a thouſand artifices of ſpeech, a thouſand figures and circumlocutions were immediately introduced. And as theſe were

were the mere productions of infinite fancy, and unlimited caprice, they ſoon exceeded in quantity the modes that derived from the principles of neceſſity, and deductions of the intellect, and grammar was an art much leſs extenſive, than rhetoric. Art however of all denominations doth then become in a good meaſure defeated, the moment it ceaſes to be concealed. Our pride is awakened, we are put upon our guard, and the rhetorician is ſet at defiance. It is then found neceſſary, to look back once again to a ſtate of nature, and to endeavour to blend her unaffected airs and winning ſimplicities, with the gaudy dreſs and trammelled gait of civilization and refinement.

Principles like theſe are indiſpenſibly prerequiſite to an inveſtigation of

the graces of the ſacred writings. God, when he condeſcendeth to ſpeak in the language of men, is far from borrowing from the precepts of human ſkill, or the refinements of human ſcience. What he delivers is indeed greatly calculated, to melt the ſuſceptible heart with pathos, and to aſtoniſh it with magnificence. But all its beauties ſavour ſtrongly of ſimplicity, and a genius that ſcorns to ſtoop to embelliſhment and ſtratagem. Its reaſonings are nervous, pointed and conciſe; and its narratives to the laſt degree plain, inartificial and unadorned. There are no traps to elude our impartiality. It is the very emblem of its hero. It exhibiteth the ſublimeſt virtues without arrogance, and the bittereſt ſufferings without execration. When it deſcribeth ſcenes the moſt calculated to touch the imagination of

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any the world ever beheld, it doth not raiſe its ſtyle, and adorn itſelf in the flowers of eloquence; but evermore preſerves the ſame regularity and chaſtiſed ſobriety. It appeareth to reſt entirely in the inherent unalienable weight of the facts it relateth.

And as are the writings, ſuch in good meaſure are the diſcourſes of the apoſtles, and the converſations of Jeſus. They abound with ſentiments more ſtriking, and thoughts more comprehenſive, than are any where elſe to be met with. But they appear to diſclaim the ornaments of language, and flouriſh of declamation.—One of the graces moſt naturally to be expected from this manner of writing and ſpeaking, is that mode of ſpeech which rhetoricians have ſtiled the laconic. This appears in its conſtitution the

reverſe of every thing artificial. It is founded upon the obſervation, that energy conſiſts very much in conciſeneſs, and its end is to ſuggeſt the ſentiments it is meaned to convey, whether they be one or more, in as few words as may be. I ſay, to ſuggeſt the ſentiments; for provided they be implied with ſufficient clearneſs, it contents itſelf without having them actually expreſſed. The rays of the ſun, when diffuſed through the hemiſphere we inhabit, ſuffice to chear the globe, and to keep alive vegetation and animal heat; but it is only when collected in a burning glaſs, that they impart a genuine flame to the object towards which they are directed. And thus in ſentiments. A thought may have energy and force, when drawn out into length; but it can then only tranſport the ſoul with vehemence, or over-

power

power it with ſplendour, when its point becomes centered in a ſingle phraſe, ſhort, maſculine, and pithy.—A grace then I obſerve of this ſort may reaſonably be conſidered as connatural to the ſtile of the holy ſcriptures. And accordingly we ſee that the prince of the ancient critics could find no better inſtance under this head, than that recorded by Moſes, *Let there be light, and there was light.* The peculiarity of this circumſtance, of its being celebrated by a heathen critic, hath made this paſſage of conſiderable note. But it is not to be doubted that many others that might be produced, if they do not equal it, do at leaſt ſurpaſs any parallel that ſhould be collected from the productions of a mortal pen. And among theſe I will venture to affirm, that the example of our text would not be the leaſt diſtinguiſhed.—It is perhaps unneceſſary

neceſſary to add that however the deſign of theſe places be originally anſwered by their curtneſs and brevity, yet that it cannot be an unprofitable employment, or in any wiſe tend to defeat their native ſcope, for us, who are called to addreſs you from time to time upon the ſubjects furniſhed by this volume, to ſeek to elucidate and inforce them at large, and in this ſenſe, *that which is told us in darkneſs*, to *ſpeak in the light*, and *that which* we *hear in the ear*, to *proclaim upon the houſe tops*. When a paſſage of this ſort is originally delivered, it is calculated almoſt ſolely for hearers of feeling and ſenſibility; and when handed down to us in writing, even ſuch will frequently be apt to paſs it over at unawares, without beſtowing upon it the attention it deſerves.—That we may the more fully enter into that which I have recommended

mended to your preſent attention, it will be proper for me to take a brief retroſpect to the ſtory with which it is connected.

The ſaviour of mankind then had now been crucified, and when dead, lain in the ſilent tomb. His followers were as *ſheep without a ſhepherd*, diſappointed, dejected and diſconſolate. They underſtood not the nature of his kingdom. *They had not yet received the Holy Ghoſt.* Though their maſter had repeatedly aſſured them, that he ſhould *riſe again on the third day*, yet this was *a hard ſaying*, that their ſhallow reaſon could not admit, and their weak faith could not digeſt. But what they wanted in diſcernment, they ſeem to have made up in diffidence on the one hand, and attachment on the other. They were grievouſly diſappointed in the

the firſt object of their wiſhes. They beheld their promiſed ſovereign expire under the ſentence of a malefactor. You perhaps expect them to have neglected and deſpiſed one, in whoſe character they had been ſo egregiouſly miſtaken. You would not wonder, if exaſperated at the aſtoniſhing contraſt, they had treated his remains with inſult and contumely. But how different their conduct! Though abaſhed, perplexed and confounded, they could not wipe away the memory of his virtues; and though upon their own ideas they could hope for neither profit nor honour in any thing they further did in regard of him, yet do they reſolve carefully to perform for him the laſt offices, and to afford to his remains all thoſe marks of reſpect which it was in their power to beſtow.

The

The body was interred upon the eve of the ſabbath. *There was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary ſitting over againſt the ſepulchre. They beheld the tomb and how the body was laid. And having returned, and prepared ſpices and ointment, they reſted,* we are told, *the ſabbath day according to the commandment.* They conſider themſelves as about to perform the laſt reſpect to the ſaviour of the world. They felt the trueſt ſorrow and the warmeſt attachment. Sorrow uſes to be impatient, and love will not away with every ſlight excuſe; but they *reſted the ſabbath day according to the commandment.* And doth not their conduct cry ſhame upon us, who, not contented with the ſix days voluntarily made over to us, for the lameſt reaſons and the moſt frivolous excuſes, encroach upon the ſacred time that ſhould be dedicated to the ſervice of heaven,

heaven, and neglect the offices of devotion that are ſolemnly enjoined upon us by ſo venerable an authority?— But when that obligation was diſcharged, *on the firſt day of the week, while it was yet dark*, we find *Mary Magdalene* coming *to the ſepulchre*.

It is probable that this journey is the ſame with that recorded by the other evangeliſts, and of conſequence that there were with her at this time the other women enumerated by them, though John, who is allowed to have had their goſpels before him, and who ſtudiouſly avoided repeating what they had already ſaid, mentions only her, as the fact he was about to relate referred to her alone. As ſoon then as they came to the garden, and *found the ſtone rolled away from the door of the ſepulchre*, we are to ſuppoſe them to have ſeparated.

ſeparated. Magdalene immediately returned to carry advice to Peter, while they probably went forward to enquire what was become of the body of Jeſus; *for as yet they knew not the ſcriptures, that he muſt riſe again from the dead.*—In the mean time, this is not the only hypotheſis that hath been invented, to ſolve this little ſeeming inconſiſtency in the ſacred ſtory. But I will not trouble you with theſe things. The account before us ſtands pretty much the ſame upon them all. And it will be moſt to our preſent purpoſe to conſider it in a manner ſeparately and detached from the reſt of the narration.

The women then being diſperſed different ways, and *Peter, and the other diſciple,* after having aſſured themſelves of the truth of the account they had received,

received, being gone *away again unto their own home*, Mary was left alone at the foot of the ſepulchre. Solitude affords a mighty relief to all the tender paſſions. While hurried along from one little buſy ſcene to another, while occupied in paſſing and repaſſing between the city and the garden, ſhe had little room for ſuſpence and contemplation. But no ſooner is ſhe in this ſituation, and at leiſure to ruminate on the various circumſtances of that eventful morning, than every anxious recollection ruſhes upon her ſoul. Oſcillating from doubt to doubt, harraſſed between alternate hope and deſpair, ſhe knows not how to ſupport herſelf. She *ſtood without at the ſepulchre weeping*. It was not merely the abſtract ſituation of her mind that affected her; the ſcene before her impreſſed every tender image with redoubled

redoubled energy. That ſepulchre in which had lately been depoſited the loved remains of all that was dear to her, that ſepulchre which ſhe now ſaw deſerted by its godlike inhabitant, attracted her attention and fixed her heart. Methinks I ſee her ſtreaming eyes, dimmed indeed with tears, but through the cloud caſting many a longing regard, and nailed as it were to the melancholy object. *And as ſhe wept, ſhe looked into the ſepulchre.* Still further. It was not a mere inactive glance ſhe turned upon it. *She ſtooped down.* She hung over it, as though ſhe would devour it at every glance. She drank in, as it were, with inſatiate greedineſs, that ſorrow which overwhelmed her ſpirits, and ſeemed ready to burſt all the ſtrings of her heart. Surely, never was a picture of ſo conſummate grief. How paſſionate, and

yet how unaffected! *But Mary ſtood without at the ſepulchre weeping, and as ſhe wept, ſhe ſtooped down, and looked into the ſepulchre.*

It was in this poſture that ſhe firſt perceived the viſion of angels. In her behaviour upon this occaſion we may obſerve at the ſame time the moſt unrivalled beauty, together with that ſtrict conformity to nature and truth, which affords the ſtrongeſt intrinſic evidence of the veracity of the ſacred ſtory. A writer, that dealt in fiction and fancy, would certainly have repreſented her as exceedingly ſtartled and ſurpriſed. But we find nothing of this in the evangeliſt. She views them without emotion, and anſwers their interrogatory with careleſſneſs and inattention. *Their countenance was like lightening, and their raiment white and gliſtering.*

gliſtering. For fear of them, the keepers, men trained to hardiment and courage, *became as dead men.* Their minds were diſengaged, and their aſtoniſhment was raiſed to the higheſt pitch by this unuſual appearance. But Mary's heart, entirely pre-occupied by a reigning paſſion, had not room for a thought upon a circumſtance like this. Grief, my friends, ſeldom pays much attention to external ſhow and the pomp of appearance. It levels all the boaſted diſtinctions of human kind. It diſregards all thoſe ranks, and honours, and dignities that the world admires. It treats ſuch as approach it without thoſe nice diſtinctions that civilization has invented. Poſſeſſed of one ſad idea, it broods over it, it can attend to nothing elſe, it can think of nothing elſe.

It is at this inſtant that the ſaviour addreſſes her. But to him ſhe obſerves the ſame conduct as in the preceding inſtance. She affords him only a ſide glance, her eyes ſtill fixed upon the ground. Sorrow did not let her perceive who he was. Her eyes were dimmed with tears. Her heart was filled with its own reflections. She accoſts him as the gardener. *Sir*, cries ſhe, *if thou haſt borne him hence, tell me where thou haſt lain him, and I will take him away.*—It is thus, my friends, that violent paſſions ever defeat their own ends. They ſuperſede every means of relief and conſolation. They will not liſten to the voice of moderation and truth. They *will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely.* So Mary, engroſſed with ſorrow, her eyes clouded, her underſtanding dull and inattentive, deigns not ſo far to examine

examine this new avocation, as to learn, which ſhe might have done, that all her grief was vain, that the bleſſing of *thoſe that mourn*, was ready to deſcend upon her. Like *Rachael mourning for her children*, ſhe refuſes to *be comforted*.

The next incident in this moving ſtory is that recorded in the words of my text. *Jeſus ſaith unto her, Mary.*— Having thus largely traced out the connection it ſhall be the buſineſs of that which remains of the diſcourſe, to enquire in a ſummary way, in the firſt place, what are the ſentiments implied in this apoſtrophe of our ſaviour, and ſecondly, into the inſtruction we may be expected to derive from the paſſage before us for the amendment of our hearts and the direction of our conduct.

And the ſentiment moſt immediately implied is that of expoſtulation. "Alas, Mary, and doſt thou not know "one whom thou profeſſeſt ſo highly "to regard? and doſt thou not recog- "nize me, thy lord and maſter? Stand "not weeping over my grave. Re- "main not in that melancholy poſture, "a lifeleſs ſtatue, a monument of ſad- "neſs and dejection. Turn thee, and "behold thy lord. Liſt up thine "eyes, and recollect thy ſaviour. Oh, "be not 'loſt in loſs itſelf.' Think "on my laſt inſtructions. It becomes "my diſciples to *weep, as though they* "*wept not.* You are to moderate your "paſſions, and to *ſorrow not as do others.* "*If ye loved me,* ye could not ſurely ſo "ſoon forget my leſſons: and *if ye* "*loved me,* ſuch was the tenour of the "leſſons themſelves, *ye would rejoice,* "*becauſe I ſaid, I go unto the Father.*"

There

There is another ſubject of expoſtulation, to which we cannot but ſuppoſe our ſaviour had ſome alluſion in the paſſage before us. " Repeatedly, du-
" ring the whole courſe of my miniſ-
" try, did I foretel my death, did I
" foretel that on the third day I ſhould
" riſe again. *Oh, thou of little faith,*
" *wherefore didſt thou doubt?* Thou
" couldeſt not forget aſſurances ſo fre-
" quently reiterated, and ſo ſtrongly
" inſiſted on. Didſt thou diſbelieve
" them? If I were the promiſed Meſ-
" ſiah, could I lie? And if I were an
" impoſtor, was I worth a thought?
" could I be worthy of ſo diſtinguiſhed
" an attachment? *Thinkeſt thou not that*
" *I could have prayed the Father, and he*
" *would preſently have given me more than*
" *twelve legions of angels? As the Father*
" *hath life in himſelf, even ſo hath he given*
" *unto the ſon to have life in himſelf. No*

" *man taketh my life from me, but I lay it*
" *down of myſelf; I have power to lay it*
" *down, and I have power to take it a-*
" *gain; this commandment have I received*
" *of my Father.*"

A third ſentiment implied in our text is that of tenderneſs and pity. " Alas, Mary, why weepeſt thou? " Why art thou overcome with ſorrow " and dejection? *Turn* unto me, *and I* " *will heal* your ſorrows. Draw near, " and I will *wipe away the tears from* " your *face.* Your attachment, how- " ever miſtaken, is lovely and amia- " ble. *Great is* its *reward* with my " heavenly Father. But, why do I " talk of a future and a diſtant reward? " Behold thy reward is even before " thee. Behold thy Lord is riſen from " the dead to requite thine affection. " Receive then the recompence of thy

" diſtinguiſhed

" diſtinguiſhed attachment. Open thy
" heart to this fulneſs of joy. Thy joy
" *ſhall* no man *take from* thee."

The laſt ſentiment I ſhall notice in the preſent enumeration is that of conſolation and triumph. " Oh, look no
" longer into my grave. Contemplate
" no more that melancholy image of
" my humiliation. That humiliation,
" thoſe ſufferings are cloſed for ever.
" *It is finiſhed.* Ah, Mary *what* cameſt
" thou *forth for to ſee?* Thy lord,
" wrapped in *grave clothes, and bound*
" *with a napkin.* His corſe wan, ghaſtly and pale, as the ſurrounding
" ſhrowd. The ſon of glory invironed
" with the chilly horrors of the tomb.
" My head, without ſenſe, and without
" perception, reclined upon a marble
" pillow. My hands motionleſs, and
" nerveleſs, and wrapped in the dew
" of

" of death. Thou repaireſt to my " *grave to weep there.* Thou cameſt " to perform a few ſad and mournful " rites to my melancholy remains. " Senſeleſs with grief, thou wouldeſt " have accoſted me with every tender, " every well known accent. ' Alas, " and canſt thou not anſwer me? and " art thou gone for ever? Shall theſe " eyes behold thee no more? Shall " theſe ears be no more refreſhed with " the accents of tenderneſs and conſo- " lation? What a mournful parting! " What a cold farewel!' But behold " the contraſt. Behold it with rapture " and aſtoniſhment! That grave upon " which thine eyes are fixed, is empty, " is deſerted. Thou ſeeſt indeed *the* " *linen clothes lying.* Thou obſerveſt " the napkin and the fillets. But lo, " the bands of death are burſt aſunder! " *See the place where the lord lay.* But

ſee

" ſee with greater eagerneſs and de-
" light thy lord himſelf, revived, riſen,
" aſcending. *I go unto my Father, and*
" *your Father, to my God and your God.*
" Oh, then contemplate, recognize,
" never forget the triumphs of a re-
" deemer. Triumphing over death.
" Death is *the laſt enemy*. Death is the
" tyrant of the whole world. He
" forges iron chains, which at his ap-
" pointed time he impoſes upon every
" man. He holds his ſubjects in an
" eternal ſlumber. There are no tu-
" mults, and no rebellions to diſturb
" his reign. Not a murmur is to be
" heard. From his 'bourne no tra-
" veller returns.' Darkneſs, ſluggiſh-
neſs, and long deſpair,

" Reign in eternal ſilence there.

" But I have riſen ſuperior. I have
" ſubjugated

" ſubjugated the monſter. I have " trampled him under my feet. *Look* " *unto me, and be ye healed, all ye ends of* " *the earth.* From henceforth, *whether* " *Paul, or Apollos, or the world, or life,* " *or death, or things preſent or things to* " *come; all are yours; and ye are Chriſt's;* " *and Chriſt is God's.*"

And now, my friends, I will appeal to yourſelves, whether I have not given a fair repreſentation of the ſenſe of my text? *Jeſus ſaith unto her, Woman, why weepeſt thou? whom ſeekeſt thou? She ſuppoſing him to be the gardener, ſaith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou haſt lain him, and I will take him away. Jeſus ſaith unto her, Mary.* He expoſtulates with her, he conſoles her, and he triumphs with her at once. And if this be a fair repreſentation, I need not aſk you, whether ever

ever any thing was more full and expreſſive? Where can you meet with a finer inſtance of the laconic, the comprehenſive? A thouſand tender ſentiments preſs upon him; and he utters them at once. He beholds his affectionate diſciple overwhelmed with all the conflicting emotions that human nature can experience, and he comforts her in a word.

I can but juſt mention thoſe inferences upon which I meaned to have enlarged. Do not think I have been entertaining you with an idle ſtory. It is fraught with advice and inſtruction. And one of the firſt obſervations that ſuggeſts itſelf, is the illuſtration afforded by this incident to that maxim of our ſaviour, *To whom much is forgiven, the ſame loveth much.* She who is thus diſtinguiſhed, is Mary Magdalene,

out

out of whom he had caſt ſeven devils, and who appears formerly to have been of the loweſt and moſt abandoned character of any of his followers. And which of you can lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, To me *much* hath not been *forgiven?* How often have ye ſlighted the calls of a ſaviour? How little attachment have ye ſhown to his name, and affection to his cauſe? Rather how frequently have ye ſat in the ſeat of the ſcorner, and treated his religion with vain cavils, inſtead of calling it to the tribunal of ſober reaſon, and giving it that calm, that retired examination, which its credentials demand, which have led infidels to acknowledge, that "if true, it is the moſt ſolemn truth "in the world?" Have ye not by repeated offences *crucified the lord afreſh?* Oh then, weep with Magdalene; learn of her repentance and affection.

Ye

Ye cannot have a more inſtructive model.

Secondly, conſider the new light which this ſtory throws upon the tenderneſs of a redeemer. The goſpel is full of ſuch incidents. Could I teach you to read this book with the ſame willingneſs to be affected, and to be warmed, that ye frequently beſtow on the vrieſt trifle, ye would confeſs its ſuperiority, ye would acknowledge its divinity, ye would be aſtoniſhed at its magnificence. But ye avoid it as a peſt; when ye read it, when ye hear it, ye ſteel your hearts againſt its glories, ye ſhut your eyes upon its beauties. Never, my friends, never was a character made up of gentleneſs and affection like that of Jeſus. Should I compare this rude draught of a few poor fiſhermen, with all the models of goodneſs,

that

that wits have drawn, and poets feigned, ye could not but fall down and adore. But, no. Ye ſcorn the dignity of his perſon, ye deſpiſe the riches of his grace, ye inſult the *gentleneſs of the lamb*, and the *innocence of the dove*.

Let me, in the laſt place, exhort you, my fellow Chriſtians, that ye frequently obey the precept of the text, and look to Jeſus riſen, aſcending and reigning. Look not on the tomb, and dread not its terrors. He hath ſmoothed the bed of death, he hath conquered the *laſt enemy*, he hath burſt all the bands of the grave. Look up to Jeſus. He never forgets you. He will comfort you under all your infirmities, and all your ſorrows. He will *wipe away the tear* of the mourner, will exalt him to manſions of eternal joy. Look unto Jeſus, examine with Thomas the

the marks of his crucifixion, and recollect the blood that was ſpilt. Laſtly, look unto Jeſus, behold him aſcending to *his Father*, and Oh, the joyful ſound! he is *our Father* too, *to his God, and our God.* Ye ſhall ſhortly look unto Jeſus; he will come to make you partakers of his joy; *ye ſhall ſee for yourſelves, your eyes ſhall behold and not another*, ye *ſhall be with him where he is, ſhall ſee his face, and be ſatisfied with his likeneſs for ever and ever.*

SERMON VI.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

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THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

JOHN i. 36.

And looking upon Jeſus as he walked, he ſaith, Behold the lamb of God.

UNTO us, ſaith the prophet, *a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, the father of the future age, the prince of peace.* Such, my friends, are the magnificent titles of the captain of our ſalvation.

But there is a natural curioſity implanted in the minds of men, that leads us not to reſt in titles. *The kings of the earth exerciſe lordſhip, and their great ones exerciſe authority.* But kings are but men, and princes have private characters as well as their ſubjects. And in theſe characters according to the eſtimate of philoſophy are to be placed their trueſt glory. The rule of one is indeed ſomewhat more abſolute in its little circle, or more extended in reſpect of the ſubjects of its deciſion, than that of another. But upon the whole, monarchs of every age, ſeated upon a throne, and ſurrounded with the pageants of royalty, have been pretty much alike. The glittering crown, and gilded ſceptre more draw the attention of the gaping crowd, than the head that wears, or the hand that wields. It is only in a peculiar walk

that

that the man ſhines forth: and it is only when ſeparate from the buſy haunts of life, that the father of his people ſets aloof the trappings of ſtate, in order to appear eaſy, unaffected and amiable.

In purſuance of this remark, it is my deſign in the preſent diſcourſe to turn your attention to the private character of Jeſus. It is our duty to love as well as to fear him, and to court his friendſhip as well as to venerate his clemency. A leſſon this, that may be better learned from an humble delineation of the line I have propoſed, than from the moſt gaudy diſplay of his public talents and royal virtues.

It is the peculiarity of the Oriental ſtyle to abound in metaphors and alluſions. Theſe are more eſpecially

happy when dictated by infallible wiſdom upon theſe intereſting ſubjects. It is eminently deſirable, that we ſhould be aſſiſted in our conceptions of theſe ſacred themes, themes ſo neceſſarily adapted to confound every finite underſtanding. And then the great end of religion is practice. We are pleaſed indeed with the moſt mathematical delineation of great virtues and accompliſhments; but it is only when impreſſed in a ſtrong and lively manner upon the fancy, that they are calculated to awaken our emulation, and inſpire our gratitude. Now theſe two, the illuminating of the underſtanding, and the catching of the fancy, are the profeſſed ends of metaphor.

It is in conformity to theſe principles that we have the ſaviour deſcribed to us in the ſacred volume under ſo great

great a variety of imagery. Every feature of his character is illuſtrated by ſome apt ſimilitude, happily qualified to anſwer the purpoſes we have been ſtating. Are we pointed to his love for his people and the neceſſity of his redemption? He is the *bread of life*, *a fountain of living water*, and the *great ſhepherd of his ſheep*. Is our attention called to the ſtability of his church, and its dependence upon him its great author and founder? He is for a *corner ſtone*, the *ſon of righteouſneſs* and the *rock of ages*. Laſtly, is he repreſented as terrible to the enemies of his croſs? He is *the lion of the tribe of Judah*, and a *ſtone* that ſhall crumble to *powder* all ſuch as would obſtruct its progreſs.—But the figure in which he ſeems chiefly to delight, and which of all others is the moſt frequently adopted, is that which paints him to our imagination

as the *lamb of God.* It is common both to the Old Teſtament and the New. By it he is repreſented in his deepeſt humiliation, and in heaven he is ſtill the *lamb in the midſt of the throne of God.* There is ſomething at firſt ſight in this figure truly engaging, and we ſhall find it in the further progreſs of our diſcourſe, completely comprehending the ſeveral lines of that private character we propoſed to contemplate.

And one of the firſt ideas ſuggeſted to us under the notion of a lamb is purity and innocence. Whether we conſider merely the external appearance, the ſnowy whiteneſs of his fleece, and the inoffenſive gaiety of his countenance; or whether we reſpect his conduct, all eaſy and playful, all harmleſs and undeſigning, we are immediately

ately ſtruck with this ſentiment. There is no appearance of fraud or diſguiſe, no arts to overreach, no fierceneſs to overbear the meaneſt and the feebleſt of the creation. His food is the tender herb, and he drinks of the *brook in his way.*

And juſt as pure and innocent was the holy Jeſus. *He was without ſpot or blemiſh or any ſuch thing. He was holy, harmleſs, undefiled and ſeparate from ſinners. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* Where ſhall we meet with a character ſpotleſs as his? How far was it from the fierce and the lawleſs, the rapacious and the deceitful? Artleſſneſs and ſimplicity, ſincerity and guiltleſſneſs were its diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics. Theſe were the very conſtituents of his diſpoſition, and

and by theſe was every action of his life directed and governed.

Another characteriſtic of the lamb is meekneſs and gentleneſs. His very frame is tender and delicate. He doth not ſubſiſt, like the majority of his fellow brutes, upon the deſtruction of others. He doth not attack the moſt inſignificant of them all. No creature fears him. When fallen upon himſelf, he makes no reſiſtance.—His very ſports are not robuſt and vigorous, but ſoft, and airy, and tender. He is moſt eaſily tamed, and when tamed, is of all animals the moſt gentle and pliant.

Nor was the meekneſs of our ſaviour leſs remarkable. He did not *ſtrive, nor cry, neither* was *his voice heard in the ſtreets*. Fame was not his object. He did

did many of his miracles privately, and when he did ſo, he inſtructs the ſubjects of his mercy, *Go thy way, and tell no man.* When the Phariſees tempt him with the moſt captious queſtions, he calmly defeats their malice, or graciouſly reproves their folly. So diſtinguiſhed was he for this quality, that the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, when he would preſs, upon thoſe to whom he wrote, ſomething he had very much at heart, makes uſe of it by way of deprecation. *Now, I beſeech you,* ſaith he, *by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt.* And when he would exhort them that in *lowlineſs of mind each eſteem other better than himſelf,* he recommends it by the example of him, who *made himſelf of no reputation, and took on him the form of a ſervant.*

But,

But, thirdly, the patience of the lamb is equally ſtriking and peculiar. There are few creatures ſubjected to more hardſhips. He is expoſed to all the bleakneſs of the winter. He is kept upon a barren heath where no other creature would find ſubſiſtence. He is ſtripped from time to time of that genial covering which nature had beſtowed upon him. But though hardly uſed, he doth not murmur; and though ſhorn to the quick, he doth not ſtruggle and reſiſt, but at moſt only turns up a look of ſilent complaint, and expreſſes his ſufferings in a gentle bleat. A cheerful innocence ſeems to ſupport him under every calamity. And when at laſt they are all terminated by an untimely death, it doth not even then forſake him; he retains every tender blandiſhment, "and licks the hand juſt raiſed to

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"ſhed his blood." In his expiring gaſp, as in every circumſtance of his life, he ſtill appears quiet, placid, and reſigned.

And do ye not, without my poor aſſiſtance, of yourſelves perceive how all this is the exact counterpart of the character of Jeſus? *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts, but the ſon of man* had not *where to lie his head. He was a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief.* Yet did he appear ever chearful and compoſed, ready to forgive the injuries, and to mitigate the ſorrows of all that approached him. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered he threatened not, but committed himſelf unto him that judgeth righteouſly.* Accuſed falſely and unjuſtly, he *anſwered nothing.* Suſpended upon the croſs, he ſighs out a gentle prayer

prayer for his murderers. Well ſaith the prophet, *He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is led as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth.* Even after his reſurrection he ſtill remembers himſelf of the ſame unrevengeful temper. "Go," ſaith he to his diſciples, "*preach the goſpel to all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.*" The Jews were "the authors of all my calamities, "they invented every cruelty, and inflicted every anguiſh, but let them "have the firſt offers of my ſalvation. "Perhaps" according to an ingenious divine, "you will meet there, the "wretch that thruſt his ſpear into my "ſide. Tell him from that wound "iſſued the balm, that may heal all "his iniquities; tell him that that "victim holds forth to him the propo-

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" ſals of everlaſting ſalvation; bid him
" look on him he hath pierced, and
" mourn his follies, and drink in
" ſtreams of eternal joy."

I proceed to one more peculiarity of this animal, and that is, his tenderneſs and affection. He is by nature gentle and domeſtic, and eaſily becomes attached to ſuch as beſtow upon him their notice and favour. When brought up in the houſe, he becomes a companion to the maſter and his children; he eats of *his own bread*, and drinks of *his own cup*; he lies in *his boſom*, and is *unto him as a daughter*. So docile and ſubmiſſive to the maſter, ſo tender and affectionate to his offspring, that he eaſily paſſes with them for one of themſelves.

And now is not Jeſus equally kind and affectionate? Do not filial ſubmiſſion and fraternal charity equally mark his character? Was he not *obedient even unto the death?* Did he not *for the great love wherewith he loved us,* endure the hardſhips of poverty, the ſeverities of malice, and the agonies of crucifixion? And is he not with us *always even unto the end of the world? We have not an high prieſt, that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* We have not a ſaviour that deſpiſeth the humbleſt of his diſciples. *The bruiſed reed he will not break, the ſmoaking flax he will not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory.* Never doth he deſert thoſe whom he hath once made the objects of his love. He leads them through every danger. He lifts his ſhield over them, and ſpreads his banner over their heads. *They neither hun-*

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ger nor thirſt, nor doth the heat of the ſun ſmite them; for he that had mercy on them leadeth them, by the rivers of water doth he guide them. He feedeth his flock like a ſhepherd; he gathereth the lambs with his arm, he carrieth them in his boſom, and gently leadeth thoſe that are with young. And now is not this a picture of trueſt affection, and tenderneſs unrivalled and unexampled?

And ſuch, my friends, was the character of Jeſus. Such was he that was *deſpiſed and rejected* of the Jews; ſuch was the man, whom we preach, and whoſe goſpel is now ſounding in your ears. And are theſe the traits of a character merely human? Does the nature of which we partake uſe to exhibit qualities like theſe? How is this nature deſcribed by the pen of infallibility? Why, *there is not a juſt man*

upon earth, that doth good and ſinneth not. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. What reſemblance can ye find, what common features can ye trace, between this character, and that we have been exhibiting? If none, then let us own the truth, and let us act up to it like men. *It is the voice of a God and not of a man. Truly this was the ſon of God, truly this was the king of Iſrael.* Nothing but the Divinity could have exhibited ſuch a character. By no hand but that of God could the picture be drawn; from no ſeat but that of heaven could its archetype deſcend. The artfulleſt deceiver, the moſt practiſed impoſtor could never have played ſuch a cheat upon us. Can the moſt conſummate vice preſent us with a model of virtue? the niceſt hypocriſy adorn

adorn itſelf in every grace of which humanity is capable?

But this is not the only motive which my ſubject affords to the cloſing with Jeſus. This is the moſt amiable character in the world. Let us attend to it for a moment. He is wounded: But he bleeds for us. He is in an attitude of ſupplication: It is to win us to the practice of virtue. He turns around him a gentle perſuaſive look: It is to perſuade us to embrace and obey him. And will ye treat him with indifference and contempt? Ye profeſs to think him lovely and amiable. And will ye ſhake him off like a ſerpent? All ſoft and tender as he appears, he is not eaſily diſcouraged. Many a time and oft have ye treated him lightly and ſcornfully. But he returns again to proſecute his ſuit.

Some of his meſſengers it may be have died in his ſervice within your notice, *Your fathers killed the prophets, and ye build their ſepulchres.* Yet doth he ſend others. We pretend to nothing upon the ſcore of our own characters. The ambaſſador, though he be the counſellor and favourite of his maſter, talks not of that. He only reminds them of the prince he repreſents. And if ourſelves be not *caſtaways*, happy are we. But it is not here that we found our pretenſions. *We beſeech you in Chriſt's ſtead.* And ſurely in this regard we deſerve your attention. You are to imagine yourſelves perſonally addreſſed by the *lamb of God.* You are to imagine innocence and inoffenſiveneſs ſoliciting you to the purſuit of your trueſt intereſts. Grant their requeſt, and you illuminate the lovelieſt countenance, and you inſpire the moſt benevolent

benevolent joy, that the univerſe hath to boaſt. And can you find in your hearts to treat them with contumely?

Thou hardened ſinner, that haſt gone on ſo long in the ways of vice: that haſt ſinned againſt ſo much light and ſo much knowledge: that profeſſeſt perhaps to adorn the doctrine of the goſpel, and art indeed its diſgrace and its obloquy: that haſt been ſo repeatedly warned, and *being often reproved, hardeneſt thy neck.*—Seldom do we meet with a ſubject that ſeems to have the ſmalleſt chance of affecting you. You have withſtood ſo many expoſtulations, you have reſiſted ſo many perſuaſions, that we ſcarcely know how to addreſs you. But ſurely if any motive can reach your heart, and if any thing ſhort of the eternal

world can awaken you to repentance, it muſt be derived from the ſubject we are now conſidering.—O vain, and heedleſs mortal! ſee what it is thou art doing. Thou art trampling upon the lamb. Thou art *crucifying the ſon of God.* Repeating all his agonies, and giving a new ſting to every wound. And is it in humanity to have our eyes opened, to have our ſenſes awakened, and yet to go on in a conduct like this? But there is yet one thing that I will leave with you. I will but juſt mention it. It is too horrible to be dwelt upon. You will find it in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Revelation. *And if any man obey not the goſpel of Chriſt, but obey unrighteouſneſs; the ſame,* ſaith the apoſtle, *ſhall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, that is poured out without mixture in the cup of his indignation; and he ſhall be puniſhed with*

with fire, in the preſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of the lamb. Even then ſhall the ſacred image haunt him. Even then ſhall he ſeem to reproach him with his cruelty and his brutality. Oh, anguiſh unheard of, and inexpreſſible!

But if this view of the character of Jeſus is fruitful of motives to repentance, it ſerves no leſs to furniſh an example for the direction of our conduct. Let us riſe above all ſcholaſtic diſtinctions. Let us *receive with meekneſs*, with ſimplicity, *the engrafted word which is able to ſave our ſouls.* How often is the redeemer held forth to us for an example? Is there any light in which he is held forth oftener? Let us then acknowledge that the great end for which he ſuffered was the intereſts of morality. And let us confeſs

ſeſs that the great uſe of his conduct was to *leave us a pattern, that we might follow his ſteps. The grace of God hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we live ſoberly, righteouſly and godlily in this preſent world.* And where can we find a model more complete? Is our object internal eaſe and conſcious pleaſure? What can have a more direct tendency to theſe things, than ſimplicity, and modeſty, and contentment? Do we wiſh to be reſpected and honoured in the world? What more venerable than piety, and charity, and beneficence? Would we attain to true greatneſs, and heroic virtue? What more heroic than meekneſs, and patience, and forgiveneſs of injuries? Every thing that is worthy our purſuit, every thing that deſerves our attention is concentred here.—Let

us go with John, and *look upon Jeſus as he walked.* How awful, and yet how lovely! How majeſtic, and yet how condeſcending! Do ye not wiſh to reſemble him? Would ye afford nothing that ſo ye might be poſſeſſed of his virtues? But it is beneath the dignity of a man to envy and pine after that, which but for one timely exertion, but for one well formed reſolution, ye might obtain and no man take from you. *Ariſe then and be doing, and the Lord be with you.*

My friends, ye do not come hither to hear ſome new thing, and to learn that with which you were before unacquainted. We pretend to nothing of this ſort, and can tell you but one plain ſtory, that is ſeventeen hundred years old. You have often looked *upon Jeſus as he walked,* and wept over the

the ſad ſtory of his ſufferings.—But methinks there are ſome among you that tire of the endleſs repetition, and to whom our words ſeem but as idle tales. You love a melting ſtory, and the tears of ſympathy are pleaſant unto you. And yet your bibles lie neglected upon your ſhelves. You are ready to exclaim with Dives in the parable, *Nay, father Abraham*, but if ſomething unexpected claimed our attention, and *if one roſe from the dead*, we ſhould believe. But, no. Old as the ſtory is, it is inexhauſtible. *Angels* do but *look into it*. And plain as it may ſeem, there is not another in the world half ſo affecting. It is the maſterpiece of the divinity. God, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, has exhauſted upon it infinite pathos. Fear not the rending rocks and the trembling earth; fear not the gaping tombs and the

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riſing dead. No, ſirs, if ye can hear this ſtory, calm, unmoved, inſenſible, ye may ſhake hands with deſtruction. God has not another inſtrument in all his ſtores, to touch the conſcience and to melt the heart, that can be compared with it. *There is no other name given under heaven, whereby we might be ſaved.* When ye hear it, ye ſhould ſay thus with yourſelves. Here I am led to my laſt reſort. If ever this flinty *heart* be turned to *fleſh*, if the Almighty ever beſtow upon me a gracious look, if I ever *behold his face, and be ſatisfied with his likeneſs*, if impenitence and deſtruction be not my irreverſible doom;—it is with mine eye fixed on this *brazen ſerpent*, that I muſt derive the healing balm, and at the foot of this croſs that I muſt weep my follies paſt. If I riſe from this ſeat, unaffected and unamended; if I finally

turn

turn my back upon this croſs, I may conſider my condemnation as ſealed, I may *ſay unto corruption, thou art my father, and to hell and the abyſs, thou art my mother and my ſiſter. Oh that men were wiſe, that they would remember this, that they would conſider their latter end!*

FINIS.

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